



The State of Korean American Marriages



**Prepared by
Korean Churches for Community Development**

Rebecca Y. Kim, Ph.D.
Pepperdine University

Hyepin Im, MBA, MDiv.
Korean Churches for Community Development

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Special thanks to: Various Korean American churches, pastors and community leaders for taking part in the research project; also special thanks to Young Jin Kum, Rev. Byung Dal Kum, and Marina Flores.

Comments from Marriage Education Leaders

"This report validates our great optimism about the campaign to strengthen marriage in the Korean community. The breadth and depth of KCCD's work is an example for all the rest of us to follow." **Diane Sollee, Founder and Director, Smart Marriages**

"My own experience has brought to me more Korean American families with troubled marriages than I ever thought possible. I wondered why. This report has been such an eye opener. It illuminates the causes of distress and the opportunities for response and prevention. It is a remarkable report. Thanks so much. I will use it and use it." **Mary Ann Swenson, Resident Bishop, Los Angeles Area, The United Methodist Church**

"The State of Korean American Marriages is a fabulous document based on carefully researched information and results that are expressed with intelligence and clarity. I am full of enthusiasm and the desire to help this most worthy community to experience happier lives and bring happiness to future generations. This document gives me the tools to be able to address the true needs of Korean American families. This community contributes so much to our society! We need to contribute to them." **Cloe Madanes, President, The Robbins-Madanes Center for Strategic Intervention**

"Great Report! A masterful job that you have done. We keep thinking with ME that one size fits all. What a huge mistake. This report is a comprehensive study of the Korean Family and Marital Relationships. This reports points out the need for an active intervention in the Korean family that will emphasize its strengths while dealing with the specific challenges this culture faces. We continue to minimize the traumatic effects of immigration and integrating into the American Culture. Korean American families exemplify the face of trauma in making the move to the US. For example, the elevated levels of smoking in Korean youth could be explained by this challenge. A recent study showed that smoking among the young is related to trauma. Immigration is a trauma and its effects last beyond one generation." **Carolyn Curtis, Executive Director, Healthy Marriage Project, Sacramento**

Comments from Marriage Education Leaders (continued...)

"It is very important to me, as a curriculum developer, to make Mastering the Mysteries of Love RE culturally appropriate for each of the cultures who use it. That task has been made a hundred times easier for the Korean community by this study. From reading it I can be more deeply empathic to the needs of Korean couples and can make adjustments as I work with Korean marriage educators to match couples' needs. Much of this I would not have known without this study. I wish every cultural group I work with could do the same thing!" **Mary Ortwein, Co-author of Mastering the Mysteries of Love Relationship Enhancement**

"I believe this is a masterful in-depth survey and analysis of Marriage matters within the Korean American population that is reported in cogent, vibrant and compelling ways. This research helps Marriage Educators better understand many complex and compelling problems within Korean American marriages and will enable the promise of Marriage Education to reach its full potential within the Korean American communities of America." **Patty Howell, Ed.M., A.G.C., Vice President of Operations and Media Relations, California Healthy Marriages Coalition**

"The report on The State of Korean American Marriages provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing Korean American marriages along with the context for understanding these issues, and, most importantly, recommendations for effective interventions. In doing so, KCCD is helping to educate the general population as to the hidden plight of Korean American families that are distressed by the process of immigration and adaptation while also bringing hope to those who struggle under the stigma of believing that they are the only ones dealing with these issues. The report also provides a wealth of information by combining existing census and research data with new research that both confirms and expands the current knowledge base on Korean Americans. This report should be an invaluable resource for anyone who is interested in better understanding the growing Korean community in the United States." **Ruth H. Chung, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Program in Marriage and Family Therapy, University of Southern California**

"KCCD has done an amazing job of putting together a thorough, in-depth, ground-breaking report which will help educate and sensitize marriage educators who desire to develop ME curriculum and resources for Korean American couples. The unique cultural needs and the great lack of resources to meet them are unpacked in a way that challenges and motivates the reader to action. From our previous experiences of working with Korean couples both in Korea and in the USA, we are even more committed to expanding our resources for Korean American churches and communities. The amazing statistic that 70% of Korean Americans attend church points to how strategic it is to get culturally and linguistically sensitive resources that are low-cost, face-saving, fun, and couple-friendly to local churches. Two thumbs up to KCCD for such a thought-provoking and revealing look at Korean American marriages today!" **Claudia Arp & David Arp, MSW – Founders & Directors, Marriage Alive & Authors, 10 Great Dates®**

Comments from Marriage Education Leaders (continued...)

"This is a significant report in providing understanding and building up Korean American families. As the report states, Korean American families who are mostly immigrants are not easy to understand. There are multiple challenges and factors including generation gaps between the first-generation and the second-generation, cultural differences between those who are Westernized and those are who recent immigrants, differences in moral values between those who are religious/spiritual and those who are non religious, self-esteem issues related to social/economic achievement, and a sense of inferiority amongst other barriers. KCCD has worked effectively to develop the Korean American community on several levels. I am praying that not only Korean Americans but also all families in the US can overcome the various obstacles and be filled with ultimate joy and happiness."

Rev. Richard S. Shin, President of the Council of Korean Churches in Southern California

"This report is required reading for anyone who cares at all about understanding and strengthening marriages in the Korean American context. "The State of Korean American Marriages" uniquely combines a careful research perspective with helpful and practical insights. Since reading it, I have significantly improved my understanding of the influences upon the couples at my church as well as my own marriage, and how to most effectively minister to them to strengthen their marriages given these influences. I commend KCCD for providing such a valuable report."

Rev. Michael Lee, Senior Pastor, Young Nak English Ministry

I am delighted to see KCCD generating comprehensive data about Korean American marriage status. Contrary to "the model minority" label by the mainstream culture which either makes Asian Americans unnecessarily visible, or invisible, the direct interviews from the community makes the report much more authentic. Although through word of mouth, the reported data has been wide-spread, the hard data has been absent. This report will put the silenced pain on the map and access rightful resources and services for the neglected in our midst. I deeply appreciate KCCD's hard work in generating the crucial need assessment and also offering strategies to assist culturally relevant marriage education. Many people have benefited from the leadership of KCCD through housing issues, and now the strengthening of marriage will build stronger community which in turn will build a stronger nation. I thank God for your leadership that transforms our community and beyond. **Rev. Young Lee Hertig, PhD, Vice President/Southern California Regional Director, of ISAAC (Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity), The Chair of AAWOL (Asian American Women On Leadership)**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the prevailing image of Asian Americans as the model minority, Korean Americans and Asian Americans suffer from many economic and social challenges that impact the health of their marriages and family life. Overall, the number of divorced Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) more than doubled between 1996 and 2002.¹ In the recent years, the news coverage by Los Angeles Times and Washington Post of family murder-suicides in the Korean American community, committed by husbands who were troubled by marital and financial discord, reveal underlying marital problems that need to be addressed.

Economic challenges have serious impact on marriages. Korean Americans are one of the poorest ethnic groups in the United States, along with Latinos, African Americans and Native Americans.² In Los Angeles County, 15.81% of Koreans fall below the federal poverty line, compared with 14.82% in California, and 6.44% are unemployed, compared to 5.78% statewide.³ Korean Americans also have the highest rate of self-employment amongst all ethnic groups,⁴ which translates into couples working long hours together, creating additional strain and the neglect of children.⁵ Koreans have the highest rates of domestic violence among Asian Americans.⁶ In addition, with an estimated 75% of Koreans having arrived in the U.S. after the 1970s, many face significant language barriers.⁷ Despite these gripping underlying realities, the

¹ U.S. Census 2002.

² The 2000 U.S. Census puts Koreans' income just above that of African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans.

³ U.S. Census 2000, Summary, Korean American Coalition Los Angeles—Census Information Center. In Los Angeles City, the Korean poverty rate (20.58%) is much higher than the national rate (14.77%). Compared to other Asian groups, the poverty rate for U.S.-born Koreans (12.42%) is very high; it is three times as high as that of the U.S.-born Japanese (4.90%) and almost twice as high as that of the Filipinos (7.37%) (U.S. Census 2000; News Release, November 22, 2002. Korean American Coalition – Census Information Center, Center for Korean American and Korean Studies, CSLA)

⁴ U.S. Census 2000 data shows Korean entrepreneurship at 19.9%--Korean American Coalition-Census Information Center's News Release November 22, 2002.

⁵ National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, 1996.

⁶ *Strengthening Families in the Korean/Asian Immigrant Community*. 2003. Hyepin Im.

⁷ U.S. Census 1990.

needs of Korean American families have been lost in easy categorizations of Korean Americans as just another model minority successfully living out the American Dream.

In response, this research paper has three main objectives. The first is to reveal the various hidden problems and sources of tensions within Korean American marriages; the second is to identify the marriage/education and family support needs and gaps in service within the Korean American community, particularly those needs that are specific to Korean Americans' distinct cultural and immigration experience; the third objective is to identify recommendations and strategies for building healthier marriages and families within the Korean American community.

The number of divorced Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) more than doubled between 1996 and 2002, and Koreans have the highest rates of domestic violence among Asian Americans.

II. METHOD

Korean Churches for Community Development

This research was conducted by Korean Churches for Community Development (KCCD) as part of its *Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Initiative (APAHMI)* to strengthen healthy marriages and families within the Korean American and greater Asian Pacific American (APA) community.). KCCD is the oldest and largest Asian American faith-based organization in the country that has led the way in building partnerships across sectors and communities for innovative initiatives to serve its communities. As the premier advocate, capacity builder, and partner for addressing community challenges, KCCD has served as a bridge between the Korean American community and the community at large to remove cultural, language and economic barriers and to meet the various needs of the Korean and Asian American communities. Through

KCCD's leadership in organizing the APAHMI Initiative and advocating on behalf of the Asian American community, significant successes have been attained on seeking resources and helping to disseminate marriage education in the Korean and greater Asian Pacific American (APA) community. (Additional KCCD's efforts and successes are documented starting on p. 73)

Focus Groups and Surveys

Through the church and community networks available through KCCD, five focus groups were conducted and 238 surveys were collected. The focus groups were conducted between July and August of 2007 at various locations, including the KCCD office, local church organizations, and a marriage educator's home in and around Los Angeles. Given the high concentration of Korean Americans in Los Angeles (over 500,000 Koreans live in Southern California, with nearly 200,000 of these in L.A. County) and the location of KCCD, the focus groups targeted church leaders, community leaders, and marriage educators in and around the County of Los Angeles. Considering that the ethnic church is the heart and center of the Korean American community (with about 70% of the Korean American community attending Korean American churches), many pastors and church leaders also took part in our study. The focus group sample included: 1) ten first and 1.5 generation Korean American pastors, assistant pastors, and seminary students; 2) twelve first-generation elders of various Korean immigrant churches; 3) seven first-generation Korean American women leaders of various Korean immigrant churches and community organizations; 4) six Korean American marriage educators, counselors, and volunteers that serve Korean Americans; 5) and two Korean American community leaders, a pastor of 1.5 and second-generation Korean American families and the other, the Director of Family Ministries at a large Korean church. The focus groups addressed questions regarding the

state of marriages/families within the Korean American community and the available marriage/family education services and needs of Korean Americans. Further details on the focus groups including the focus group introduction letters and questions are available in Appendix B.

In addition to focus group interviews, two different surveys were conducted. One survey was distributed to church and community leaders to determine the needs and assets of marriages and family education within the Korean American community. Another survey was produced for the general Korean American public to determine the state of marriages within the Korean American community and to understand their marriage education program needs and interests. Both of these surveys were made available in Korean as well as in English and were collected using expert and snowball sampling methods. Most of all of the community leaders who participated in our focus groups took our surveys. A few of the focus group participants also took our paper surveys to their community members and returned them to the KCCD's main office. In addition, over a hundred of the paper version of the surveys were collected at the KCCD's Homeownership Fair (July 28, 2007), which was attended by more than 800 Korean Americans.⁸ Invitations to take an on-line version of the two types of surveys were also sent out via email to: a) Korean American community and church leaders (using KCCD's directory of churches and community leaders that includes over a hundred church/community leaders in and outside of California); b) members of the Korean American Professional Network; and c) friends and acquaintances of KCCD staff members and interns who are Korean American. While the focus group responses are from Korean Americans in and around L.A. County, the surveys were more widely distributed to Korean Americans across the United States.⁹

⁸ A McDonald's meal card was provided as an incentive for the participants to take the survey.

⁹ 25 of the 216 general survey respondents stated that their residence was outside of California. They were mainly from the following states: Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, Texas, New Jersey, and Virginia. One respondent resided in Seoul, Korea.

Given that the focus group as well as many of the survey respondents are leaders and marriage educators in Korean churches and community organizations and/or are those who were interested enough about marriages/families to take part in our research, the sample may be biased. The sample may be biased in favor of marriage/family education programs and may be inclined to report positively about the health of their own marriages. Respondents may also feel uncomfortable revealing their own marriage problems in the surveys. Consequently, in addition to questions on the quality of the individuals' own marriage, other questions on what the respondents thought of "other" Korean Americans' marriages and how "other" Koreans may view marriage/family education programs were incorporated. Questions on whether the individual respondents knew of "other" Korean Americans in their immediate family "having serious marriage/family problems" and whether they thought "other" Korean American families could use some marriage/family education courses were also asked. These and other survey questions are included in Appendix B.¹⁰ In addition to the focus group and survey data, part of the interview data collected by the author for a separate project on second-generation Korean Americans' ethnic and religious identity in relation to the first-generation are used in the study.¹¹

III. FINDINGS

A. Korean American Marriages at Risk

i. Korean American Community's Definition of a "Healthy Marriage"

¹⁰ As an incentive, the focus group participants were given a gift or a gift-card of \$20.00 after their participation. Survey participants were given the opportunity to win five \$50.00 Starbucks gift-cards as an incentive to take part in the survey.

¹¹ 100 personal interviews were conducted with first-generation and second-generation Korean Americans as well as other Christian community members on the ethnic identity and religious participation of Korean Americans in 2000. Some of the interview data that pertain to differences between the first- and the second-generation are used in this study. Further information on the project can be found in *God's New Whiz Kids? Korean American Evangelicals on Campus*. 2006. New York: New York University Press.

To establish a baseline on the status of Korean American marriages, focus group participants were asked, “What do Korean Americans think is a ‘healthy’ marriage?”

“A healthy marriage is having smart kids that attend the top schools and become doctors or lawyers.”

-Korean American Mother

Interestingly, most of the respondents were initially puzzled by the question and confessed that they lacked experience in conceptualizing the idea of a “healthy” marriage. Further probing, however, pointed to the following main indicators of a healthy marriage: financial stability, having “successful” children (i.e., children who excelled academically, graduated from prestigious universities with promising careers), and spending time and playing together as a couple/family. Having successful children who excelled in school was particularly critical for many Korean Americans in defining a healthy marriage. Beyond these more visible indicators, ability to communicate well and trust, respect, and understand one another were mentioned. Not having “obvious” problems like adultery, domestic violence, and drug, alcohol, and/or gambling addictions were also noted.

When the question was asked for the second-generation, the answers were similar. But from the perspective of the first-generation, the second-generation are also more independent and have a more individualistic attitude towards marriage. They take marriage less seriously and are less likely to bear through difficult times and stay in the marriage for the sake of the family. As several first-generation Korean Americans noted, the second-generation are less likely to “cham ah,” which in Korean means, be patient and endure through hard times. They are less likely to sacrifice their own individual happiness for the sake of the family or out of concern for what others would think of

“The first-generation sacrificed (even staying in unhealthy, less than ideal marriages) for the second-generation, but the second-generation just focuses on their own happiness.”

-Korean American Pastor

them. In their defense, second-generation Korean Americans can be viewed as simply having higher expectations of what a marriage should be. A second-generation makes this point by talking about her childhood Korean American friend who recently got a divorce: “When she told me that she is getting a divorce because she just no longer felt love for her husband because there was no real feeling between them, I was shocked...something like that would never fly for our parents’ (generation), they just made do...” The second-generation don’t just want to make do. They expect more out of their marriage. As a pastor of a second-generation English ministry notes, “you have to understand that [the second-generations] are not going to just bear it and live together for the sake of just living together. They are going to want a more inward connection...a real relationship.”

Relative to the first-generation where marriage is more hierarchical and patriarchal, the second-generation have a more horizontal relationship with their marriage partners. A second-generation makes this point by describing her parents’ relationship versus her own marriage relationship: “When my father wants water, he just grunts at my mom, and she will drop everything and get it for him even if he is like right next to the water... I will never let my husband get away with that.” The second-generation seek to have a relatively more egalitarian relationship with their spouses and expect more out of marriage than their parents.

It should be stressed that much of the differences that exist between the first-and the second-generation in their attitudes toward marriage is generational. When second-generation Korean Americans note that their marriages are different from the first-generation, they are talking about how they differ from their parents; they are not talking about how they differ from their first-generation Korean American peers. For example, many Korean Americans noted that the first-generation do not view “character differences” as a legitimate reason for divorce

compared to the second-generation. When they note this, however, they are essentially comparing Koreans who married in the 1970s and 1980s to those who are marrying today. Along these lines, Korean Americans suspect that young married adults in South Korea may actually be even more liberal and open in terms of gender relations and attitudes toward divorce than many of the second-generations in the U.S. This is because second-generation Korean Americans have lived with a frozen and distilled version of Korean culture through their parents who immigrated to the United States in the 70's and 80's.

Beyond these generational differences, however, there was an overall consensus that financial stability, raising successful children, and spending quality time together between a couple that trusts, respects, and communicates well together were the essential points that defined a “healthy” marriage for Korean Americans.

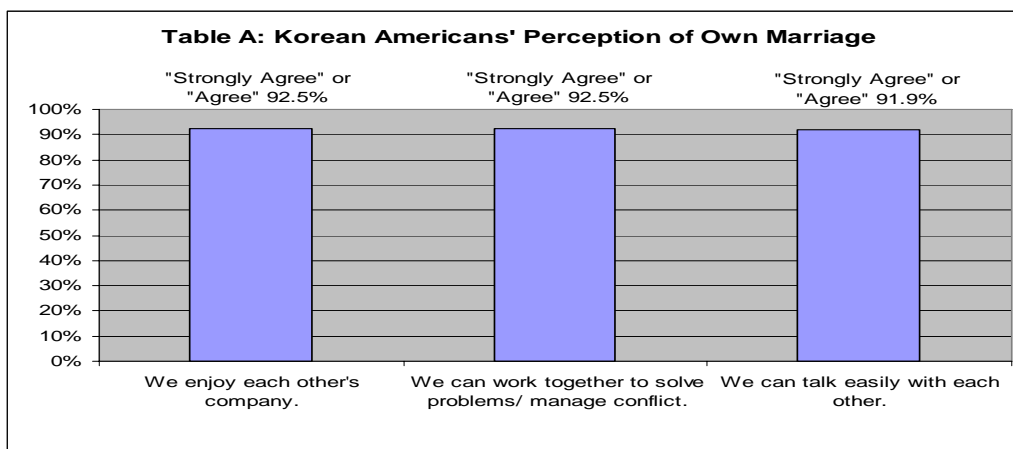
ii. Hidden Realities Behind the Model Asian Family Image

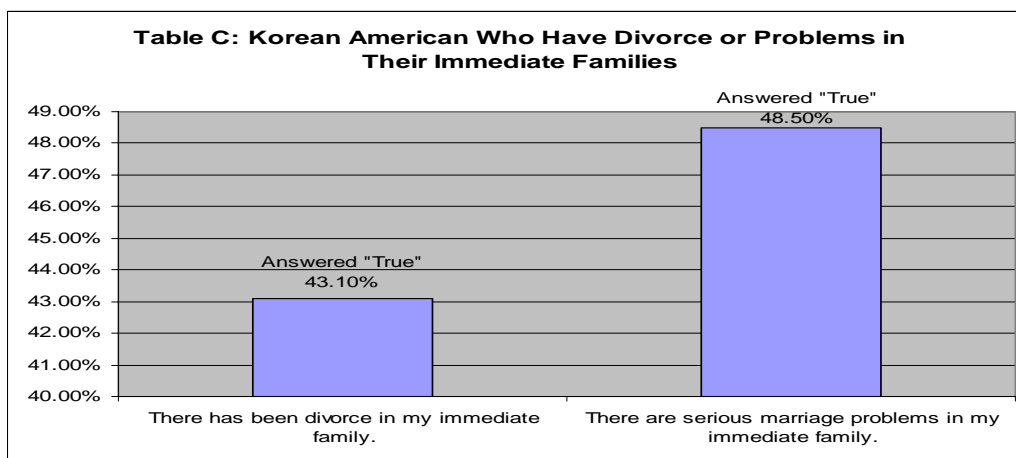
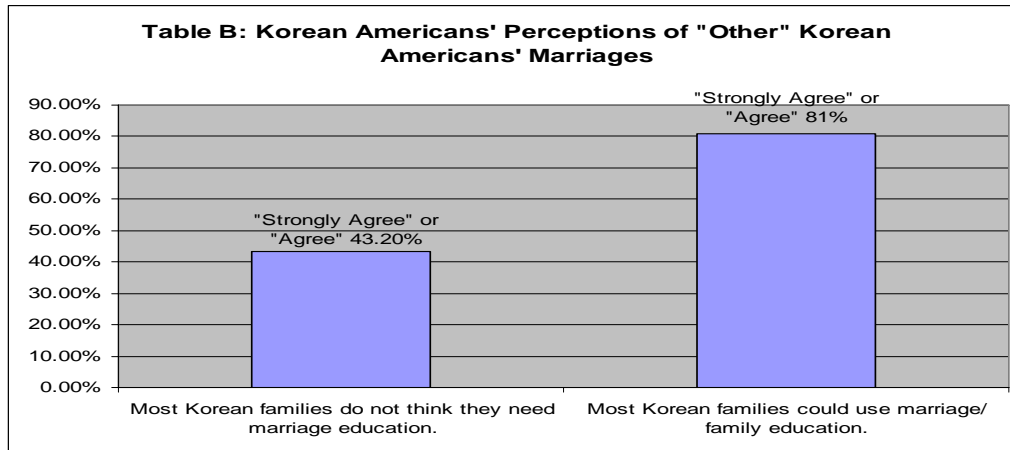
Nearly 90% of the respondents noted that they “overall, have a healthy marriage” (Table 2). 98.3% of the men and 95.3% of the women strongly agreed or agreed that they “can trust and be honest with one another”; 100% of the men and 92% of the women strongly agreed or agreed that they enjoy each other's company; and 96.6% of the men and 94.2% of the women reported that they are able to “easily talk and communicate with one another.” By these high scores, Korean Americans at a first glance appear to have model families that need no marriage support. Further findings in this study, however, reveal otherwise.

Various factors can lead Korean Americans to report positively about their marriages. First, there is a strong cultural tendency among Korean Americans to save face and present the “right appearance” in front of others. There is also a general tendency among survey participants

to respond favorably about themselves—what social scientists refer to as “social desirability”—which may be particularly strong among Koreans. In addition, a survey on “healthy” marriage may also be a self-screening process where those who volunteered are already interested in marriage and value its development. In one known case, a woman emailed us noting that she can not take the survey because a “healthy marriage survey” does not apply to her—because she is getting a divorce. The high scores may also be due to the fact that we have a sizable number of marriage educators and church leaders in our study who have already benefited from healthy marriage training and education.

Given these factors, the responses to the survey questions on how Korean Americans rated “other” Korean American marriages highlight and challenge surface-level categorizations of Korean American marriages as being healthy and without problems.





In the survey question “In my immediate family (parents, siblings, children, spouse), there has been divorce,” 43.1% of the respondents answered “True.” (Tables C and 4) To the question: “In my immediate family (parents, siblings, children, spouse), there is someone who is having serious marriage/family problems” nearly half, 48.5%, responded “True.” In addition, 81% of the survey respondents noted that “Most Korean families could use some marriage/family education courses.” (Tables B and 4). These contrasting responses of “other” marriages versus of their “own” as well as

“Many Korean families are externally married, but internally divorced.”
-Korean American Pastor

“99% of the married Korean couples surveyed responded that they would not marry the same person if they came back to life after death.”
-Study by S. Korean Scholar

answers to the open ended survey questions and focus group questions regarding the health of Korean American families demonstrate that capturing the challenges facing Korean American marriages and families can be more complex and difficult without cultural sensitivity.

A “healthy” marriage as defined by Korean Americans (a financially successful family

“Only 3% of the Korean immigrants have healthy families where the husband and wife stay together not to just simply ‘maintain the family structure.’”

-Focus Group of Church and Community Leaders

that spends time together with bright children and enjoys healthy communication, trust, and respect) is one that escapes most Korean Americans. In addition, according to the focus group respondents anywhere from 1 to 10% enjoy such marriages.

Interestingly, in the focus group where only women church elders were present, it was estimated that only 1% of Korean immigrant families actually have families that are externally as well as internally healthy. According to the focus group of church and community leaders, only 3% of the Korean immigrants have healthy families where the husband and wife stay together not to just simply “maintain the family structure,” but actually have close family relations with trust, respect, and love. Several of the focus group members mentioned a study by a Korean marriage/family scholar where 99% of the married Korean couples surveyed responded that they would not marry the same person if they came back to life after death. They elaborated that most Korean couples would think that it would be “simply crazy” for them to want to marry the same person again.

South Korea’s divorce rate is now the second highest among developed countries.

There are other unrecognized stresses, influences and trends challenging the health of Korean American marriages. Southern California enjoys the largest Korean population outside of

South Korea. As the major gateway for many business and cultural activities and exchanges between the U.S. and South Korea, the influence of South Korea is especially prevalent in the L.A. Korean immigrant community.

South Korea's divorce rate is now the second highest among members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), right behind the U.S. (There

"Many Korean families are externally married, but internally divorced."
-Korean American Pastor

were three divorces for every 1,000 South Koreans in 2002 versus 4.2 in the U.S.¹²) Actual divorce rates of Koreans in the United States are hard to come by, but one study estimates that the divorce rate for Korean immigrant men is three times higher than the divorce rate for men in Korea while the divorce rate for Korean immigrant women is five times higher than the divorce rate for women in Korea (Im 2003: 17).¹³ Marriage educators in the focus groups also pointed out that a good number of Korean immigrants come to the U.S. precisely because they are separated and/or divorced. They immigrate to the U.S. after a divorce to start afresh or choose to immigrate and live separately rather than officially get a divorce. Korean Americans also have the highest domestic violence rate among Asian Americans. In 2001, Koreans had the highest rate of prosecution for domestic violence by the Los Angeles City's Attorney's Office among Asian Americans (Im 2003: 5). As a Korean American attorney who works in the Los Angeles area commented: "Just go visit any one of the jails in places like Cerritos (cities with high concentration of Korean immigrants)... they are all full of Korean ah-ja sees (older married Korean men) stuck in jail for beating up their wives."

¹² "South Korean women campaign against legal discrimination," by Cho Mee-young, Reuters, Seoul, October 23, 2003 in *Taipei Times*; "Divorce in South Korea: Striking a New Attitude" by Norimitsu Onishi, September 21, 2003. *The New York Times*.

¹³ *Strengthening Families in the Korean/Asian Immigrant Community*. 2003, by Hyepin Im.
http://www.kccd3300.org/researchdocs/pdf/strengthening_families.pdf

B. Challenges Impacting the Health of Korean American Marriages & Families

Contrary to the model minority image, Korean American families face and struggle with many of the same problems that are present in other communities. According to the survey and focus group participants, alcohol, drug, gambling, and/or pornography addictions as well as adultery, sexual abuse, and domestic violence are key concerns among Korean American families. In fact, our research participants pointed out that these problems, particularly gambling, drinking, affairs, and domestic violence, may be even more prevalent among Korean Americans than most other ethnic groups.

For the purpose of this report, however, problems within Korean American families that are more distinct to Korean culture and unique to the immigrant experience that commonly get unnoticed will be addressed. This report will also address how problems that are present among other ethnic groups like domestic violence and adultery can become more complicated and problematic because of Korean culture and the immigration experience.

i. Problems Unique to Korean Culture

Confucian Patriarchal Hierarchy:

Without fail, all of the different focus

"A woman should look on her husband as if he were Heaven itself, and never weary of thinking how she may yield to him."
-Confucius-inspired saying

groups mentioned Korean culture's traditional patriarchal hierarchy when asked about sources of conflict in Korean American marriages. Influenced by Confucius' philosophy of order, there is a linear power relationship within the family where the husband rules over the wife, where the father rules over the son, and where the elders rule over the young. The first members of each pair are to dominate the second half; the first member is required to look after, protect, and nurture the second, while the second respects, obeys, and serves the first. Confucianism, which

was particularly influential as an ethical and philosophical system of thought and social moral order from the 14th to the 20th century, has waned in recent years with greater westernization and modernization. Its influence, however, is still prevalent as various Korean American community leaders explain:

“Korean culture disrespects the spouse (wife) ...Korean men look down on women...Korean men don’t even have the concept that they should respect women (wives), they have no concept at all.”

“Being curt and ordering your wife around like she is your junior is not considered to be rude....”

“Traditionally, women are put down, they have little power, they are treated like servants...the idea is that the wife should obey their husbands without any conditions.”

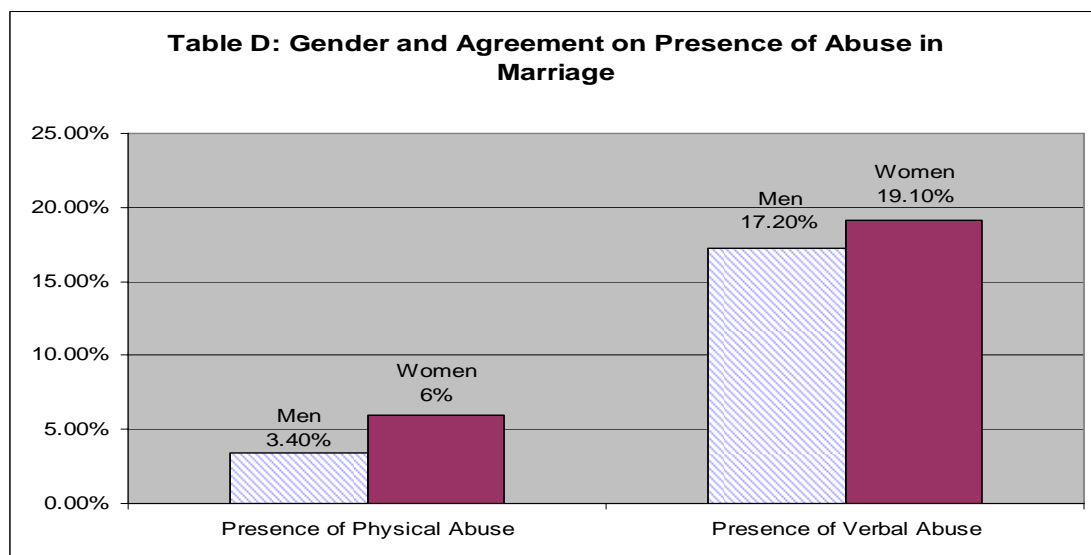
This kind of cultural outlook that places men as superior to women impacts the dynamic of everyday marriage relations.¹⁴ Leaders of the Korean American community suspect that this kind of cultural tradition contributes to the prevalence of verbal abuse between spouses, particularly abuse from the husband directed towards the wife. A marriage educator of over 15 years explains: “Men especially think that it is normal to be verbally abusive... like 80% yell at their wives and call them derogatory names. Korean men think that is a normal part of their culture to speak that way with their spouse. They don’t think that there is anything wrong with it.” When the marriage counselor shared this, a woman elder added: “I

“Dried fish and women should be beaten every three days” to keep them in their place.”

-Korean proverb

¹⁴ It should be noted that married second-generation couples can also have cultural clashes. Even if both the husband and wife are second-generation, they may have cultural tensions because one is more or less “Koreanized” or “Americanized” than the other. Second-generation Korean Americans who marry more recently arrived Korean immigrants can have these cultural conflicts as well.

know of a little boy who shuts his ears every time he hears people speaking Korean because it reminds him of his parents yelling [when they are fighting].” The same woman continued that the boy threatens people when he gets angry and tells them that he will kill them. She quickly added that this is because he was so used to hearing his father yell at his mother and threaten her life saying in Korean ‘Nuh juk ul lae?’, which means, “Do you want to die?”¹⁵ Indeed, one of the few areas where Korean Americans responded more negatively about their marriage was in verbal abuse. Among married couples, 17.2% of men and 19.1% of the women in our survey noted that they are verbally abusive and/or abused.



Mother In-law Factor: “If both your mother and I were drowning, who would you save first?”

Within a patriarchal and filially pious culture, relationships with in-laws can be uniquely difficult for Korean American immigrants. In particular, there is a strain between the mother-in-law and the daughter in-law. Problems with the in-laws were one of the most commonly listed

¹⁵ A few of the community leaders commented that this kind of interaction may be partially due to the fact that virtually every able-bodied Korean male goes through harsh military service (between 24 to 27 months) where adherence to a strict vertical hierarchy and strong verbal abuse, and sometimes even physical abuse, is common.

areas of conflict in marriage/family relationships in our study.¹⁶ (Table 7) Of course, tensions with in-laws can be problematic for a lot of ethnic groups. But for Koreans, it can be even more intense because of Korea's traditional Confucian culture that places blood ties over marital relations. This is evident in the answer to

the classic question that a Korean wife may ask her husband: "If both your mother and I were drowning, who would you save first?" The answer to this

"Why is it that according to the rites the man takes his wife, whereas the woman leaves her house? It is because the yin is lowly, and should not have the initiative; it proceeds to the yang in order to be completed."

-Confucius-inspired saying

question is most commonly, the mother. Several of our focus group participants explained that this is because: "the son's relationship with his mother is made in heaven, but a son's relationship with his wife is made by man." Reflecting this axiom, the husband will side with his mother over his wife in everyday family situations. This may not be so problematic if the son lived separately from his parents after marriage and had minimal contact with his mother. But according to Korean tradition, the woman follows her husband and lives and takes care of her husband and his family members once she gets married. Although many modern Korean families are opting out of this tradition, the effects of this kind of cultural heritage remain. Even today, a woman that marries is viewed as part of the husband's family over her biological family. Upon marriage, her name is taken from her parents' family registry and placed under her husband's family line.

Because of immigration, Korean Americans are less likely to live with their in-laws. But even an occasional visit from one's in-laws can cause strain in the family. For example, a first-

¹⁶ Interestingly, 1.5 generation pastors who work with 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans also noted that tensions with in-laws are commonplace. Even if the first-generation are more likely to stay out of their children's marriages in the U.S. than their peers in Korea, the Koreans in the U.S. are more likely to live closer to their children and have regular contact with them.

generation Korean immigrant elder talks about a friend who becomes temporarily mentally and physically debilitated after her mother-in-law's bi-annual visit to the U.S. from Korea. She explains:

Her mother in-law visits twice a year and turns the whole house completely upside down...the first thing that she will do is to head straight to the refrigerator and complain that it is a mess and clean the refrigerator, rearrange the whole house... [the daughter-in-law's] face became physically distorted because of the stress.

The mother in-law will also object if she notices that her son is enjoying a more egalitarian relationship with his wife. A Korean American woman noted how her mother-in-law became very angry that she was not using traditional Korean honorifics when she addressed her husband. A man that jumps up to help his wife with the dishes after dinner will also be greeted with frowns and disapproval by the mother in-law.

Others explain that the mother/daughter in-law tensions are due to "jealousy" between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law for the affections of the son, as another Korean elder relates: "Korean mothers raise their sons like little Princes...they cook for them, dote on them, wash their clothes...sacrifice everything for them, they pour everything out for their sons even more than their husbands, so naturally there is going to be tension." This kind of relationship dynamic can also be attributed to the traditional Confucian patriarchy where sons are prized.

Historically, Korean women have been aggressively encouraged to produce sons. It is the duty of the woman to produce a male heir to

"There are three unfilial acts: the greatest of these is the failure to produce sons."
-Confucius-inspired saying

continue her husbands' bloodline. In fact, prosperity was often judged by the number of sons, male offspring, in the family. No amount of daughters could make up for the lack of a son. Failure to produce a son can even be grounds for divorce. And the only way that a wife could

gain any sort of power over the mother-in-law is if she produced sons herself. Thus, this kind of emphasis on sons and the value of filial piety and blood relations in traditional Korean culture can cause strife in Korean American marriages, particularly in the U.S. context where gender and generational relations are more egalitarian.¹⁷

Collectivism and the Overwhelming Influence of Shame

“Dead Marriages”

In addition to a linear power hierarchy, Confucianism emphasizes the collective over the individual. Within the family context, it stresses placing the well-being of the family over that of the individual. More of a religious philosophy and a social political system than a religion, Confucianism also values the importance of maintaining one’s reputation and saving face in social interactions. These two cultural influences, desire to avoid shame and the importance of saving face lead many Korean American families to hide their family problems and prevent them from seeking outside help. It encourages couples to just maintain the face of having a family and not confront the various problems and lack of affection in their relationship.

“There are many Korean families that are externally married but internally divorced and live a shell of a marriage. They just go through the motions.... It is like having two families in one...living separately but in one house.”

-Korean Marriage Educator

¹⁷ During a drawn out discussion on the problems with mother-in-laws, one woman, who is actually living with her mother-in-law as well as her own mother in the U.S., interjected that she has a good relationship with her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law helps with much of the cooking and helps raise her kids. Thus, relations can no doubt be good. And as more women have entered the work force, making up more than 42% of the labor force in 2005, and as South Korea has become more modernized, egalitarian sex values have become more of the norm. Today’s married women in Korea are not automatically expected to live with their in-laws and become dutiful housewives. Nevertheless, remnants of tensions between in-laws continue to play a unique role in causing marital strife in Korean families.

“Father as the ‘money bag’ and mother as the nurturer”

Many of the reasons that lead some Korean Americans to maintain just a “shell of a marriage” also point to Korean culture. First, husbands are traditionally expected to be the financial provider and protector. Thus, many husbands think that so long as they “bring in the money” and put food on the table, they are doing their job as fathers. They will believe this even if they may be having an affair or not providing their wives or children emotional and verbal signs of affection. As a Korean American pastor shares, “The traditional Korean father basically thinks that he is a money bag...he just brings the money home and provides financially for the family...then he thinks his job is done even if he may commit adultery and there may be no affection, life in the marriage.” On the other side, the wife may bear with the lack of “affection and life in the marriage” by turning all of her energy to her children and living out separate lives within the same household. The ideal Korean cultural image of a dutiful wife that bears suffering and obeys her husband can also come into play.

“I am only going to bear with you until the kids turn 18!”
Korean Wife

“Putting the needs of the children over one’s own”

The Confucian emphasis on placing the needs of the family above one’s own can push couples to keep the family together even if they are personally not happy with the marriage.¹⁸ For example, marriage educators explain how many parents won’t divorce now, but will do so later once their children have grown up and have securely entered colleges. In fact, they recount how many husbands violently threaten their wives saying that they will only bear with them until

¹⁸ It should also be noted that most Korean couples traditionally married who their family members, particularly their parents, wanted them to marry. Deciding who to marry was not so much an individual than a family decision. Even today, it is common for Korean parents to have a significant say in who their children marry.

their kids turn 18. In turn, wives endure the marriage until the children grow up and become, in their minds, less likely to be damaged by divorce.

The collectivist culture of shame and saving face has an overwhelming influence on the Korean American community and makes it extremely challenging for Korean Americans to be candid about their problems and seek outside help. Women elders and marriage educators in the focus group noted how women commonly keep sexual problems with their husbands, including their husbands' pornography and sex addictions to themselves, because they don't want to incur shame on their family. Marriage support volunteers and counselors who work in Korean crisis line or phone counseling ministries noted that many callers speak to them off-line after the radio show is over due to concerns over their safety and anonymity. In many cases, sexual problems with their husbands are one of the primary reasons for their call. In addition, because pastors are often the most common if not the only source of support for Korean Americans in troubled marriages, many pastors' wives use the more anonymous phone counseling services to seek assistance. Related to these concerns, it should be noted that sex education and frank discussions on sex are greatly lacking in the Korean American community and are in need of development.

In addition to sexual problems, mental illness in the family and troubles with children are kept hidden. Koreans, more than others, don't

"To share one's family problems is like spitting up in the air...it will only fall on your face."

-Korean proverb

want to "air their dirty laundry," particularly as many Korean immigrants (over 70%) take part in small ethnic churches where gossip and news of marital strife can spread quickly. If the individuals were to ever share their marriage/family problems with others, they will have difficulty sustaining a relationship with whom they shared their problems. As a church elder explains, "95% will leave after telling their pastor (or other church leaders) about their personal

painful problems.” When asked why they feel compelled to leave, the answer was shame. “It feels good to finally let it all out and tell someone, but once they let it all out, they leave the church out of shame.” Recognizing this, it is not unusual for Korean pastors and church elders to actually refer a person having marital problems to another church so that the individual can more freely share his/her problems and get assistance.

Lack of Family Play Culture

Besides the more commonly cited cultural traits of patriarchy, shame, and collectivism, Korean Americans simply don’t know how to spend time and “play together” as a family. In Korean culture, husbands, wives, and children operate in separate spheres with distinct roles and are connected more by duty and respect than “play.” Consequently, Koreans lack a family “play culture.”

Korean Americans explain that this is not because they don’t want to have family time, but simply because most Koreans don’t know what it means to play and “have fun” together as a family, particularly since their

“Koreans don’t know how to spend time with their families... they don’t know what to do...So some will try to follow the American way and go to a park, but then they don’t find it to be so fun.... Even at church, the men will play separately and the women will gather separately and talk and the kids will play by themselves. We don’t really know how to have play time where time is spent with the entire family.”

-Korean American Pastor

own parents did not teach them how. As one pastor puts it, “we just don’t have the skills in that area, there is a lack of cultural understanding on ‘family time’ ...since we didn’t pick up how to have family play time from our parents, we just don’t know.”¹⁹

¹⁹ In talking about the influence of traditional Korean culture, we certainly do not want to paint the image that Korean culture is entirely bad for the family. Bearing through suffering, being considerate of others’ well-being, and having a strong sense of duty to family members are valuable. It can certainly keep marriages together through

ii. Negative Influence of Contemporary South Korean Culture; Korean Dramas

In addition to traditional Korean culture, contemporary South Korean culture has significant influence on the Korean American family structure. Since the 1950s, South Korea has experienced tremendous and rapid economic growth. Previously one of the poorest nations in Asia, Korea now ranks as the 12th largest economy in the world in terms of nominal value. Coupled with what some refer to as a “miraculous” economic growth, the culture of South Korea has changed. It is now far more westernized, modernized, and individualized. More women have entered the workforce, people are marrying later, having fewer kids, and living in greater prosperity. Coinciding with these changes, Korea now has one of the highest divorce rates in the world. In fact, there is currently a “divorce trend” in South Korea.

As a consequence of increasing number of divorces, remarriage coupling services are now popular, as a Korean American marriage counselor explains: “Now marriage coupling (remarriage service) has become a big business... Couples today

“When I started with the marriage counseling program in 1993, divorce was a shameful thing. There were maybe 325 divorces per day in Korea... but in 2006, there were 4,027 divorces per day!”
-Korean American Marriage Counselor

don’t want to fix their marriage, they just want to quit...even though most of them quickly regret that they divorced. There is definitely a divorcing trend.” Related to this “divorcing trend,” extramarital and pre-marital sex has become more commonplace, as a Korean woman shares: “It has gotten to the point where now if you don’t have an affair, they think it is because you are ugly or because you have a lousy personality.” Indeed, a second-generation Korean American expressed surprise that motels in Korea are essentially known as “hook up” places where people go to have pre-marital or extra-marital sex. She explained how she found free condoms and porn

difficult times, which is important. What we would like to point out, however, are the elements of Korean culture that keep people from having “healthier” marriages.

in “decent” looking motels in residential neighborhoods. When the second-generation and her husband first went up to a motel manager to ask for a room, the manager informed them that they could pay by the hour. She also looked at the couple strangely when they asked if they had to sign a guest list and later informed them that the motel had a back door, which they could use to leave the motel undetected. Another respondent added that the motels will even have someone cover the license plates of the customer’s cars to provide them added privacy.

Traditionally, it is not uncommon for Korean men, particularly those who are successful to have affairs and “women on the side.” In fact, several Korean American men eagerly noted that a successful Korean man is viewed as a “loser” if he does not have other women. However, what is more novel is that women are now having more affairs and that pre-marital sex has become more commonplace.

All of these changes are significant because what happens in contemporary South Korea affects Koreans in the U.S. With continued immigration from Korea, the Korean American community is continuously refreshed and kept up

“As they watch those shows, they naturally put themselves in [the character’s position] and think, if they can get a divorce, why can’t I? If they can have an affair, why shouldn’t I? ... Why should I bear? It starts changing their mentality, their way of thinking.”

–*Marriage Educator*

to date on the changing cultural patterns in Korea. Internet, ease of travel, and general globalization of consumer products and services also make it easy for the two countries to connect. In cities with high concentrations of Korean Americans like Los Angeles and New York, there are various Korean language newspapers, television, and radio programs that can be used to stay in tune with contemporary Korean culture. There are even cable television services that enable Korean Americans to directly watch all of the television programs broadcasted in Korea.

One of the important sources of this cultural connection that we found surprising is “Korean dramas” or “Korean videos.” While Korean dramas (soap operas) have traditionally upheld Confucian traditions like importance of family, hierarchy, honor, and chastity before marriage, more Korean dramas and films are depicting extramarital affairs, co-habitation, pre-marital sex, and divorce. Adultery, casual sex, and sexually charged themes have become more commonplace. There is now even a reality show that dramatizes real couples filing for divorce, called “Love and War.” The popular show, which is also aired in parts of the U.S. and is available through videos depict real life Korean couples in unhappy marriages filing for divorce for a host of reasons including infidelity, problems with in-laws, and/or financial conflicts. Exposure to these and other forms of cotemporary Korean media make Korean Americans rethink their own marriages and lead some of them to view affairs and divorces as more optional.

The impact of these media programs should not be trivialized given that Korean videos and television programs are “the major” source of television entertainment, if not entertainment altogether, for many Korean immigrants who do not speak English well. As one Korean American woman explains: “You don’t understand, Korean videos are so big, their effect is so great. For some Koreans, Korean videos are all they have. They will come home late from work and watch the videos all night long until they fall asleep.” Even without cable, there are two television stations in Los Angeles and Orange Counties which broadcast Korean news, dramas, and shows every night of the week. Numerous Korean video stores also make it easy for Koreans, even non-Koreans, to be connected to contemporary Korean culture. Korean videos can also be viewed on-line through various websites, including *You Tube*. Information and updates on the latest Korean dramas and celebrities can be found on-line even on web encyclopedias like *Wikipedia*. Thus, what happens in Korea can be felt in Los Angeles, New York, etc.

Beyond media, Korean Americans, particularly those who reside in areas with large concentrations of Koreans, have access to various social organizations

“There are plenty of married Koreans at the golf ranges, but they are not there with their own spouses.”

–*Korean American Pastor*

that can keep them connected to other Koreans and updated on Korean culture but also create opportunities for affairs. For example, when asked just where Korean Americans who have affairs actually find people to have affairs with, many of the focus group respondents noted that that they find them via social networks like “dong chang” alumni associations and clubs for various professional associations. There are even websites that enable Korean Americans to look for their “first-love” in Korea and reunite with them in the United States. Interestingly, golf ranges in places with large concentrations of Korean Americans are popular places for married Koreans to meet fellow Koreans for more than just friendship. Moreover, there are Korean social clubs and bars, which make it easier for Korean immigrants to look for sex before and outside of marriage. The importance of drinking on many business as well as social gatherings in Korean culture and the availability of Korean bars and clubs that provide opportunities for sex makes extra- and pre-marital sex more likely.²⁰

Because of this, marriage educators suspect that it may actually be healthier for Korean Americans to live away from areas

Korean Americans are shaped by remnants of traditional Confucian culture as well as the seemingly opposite and rapidly changing contemporary Korean culture.

where many new Korean immigrants are concentrated and where contemporary Korean culture is readily accessible. As one comments: “Koreans outside of L.A. living farther away who are not connected to the community can actually be better off because they can live alone in their [frozen culture] with the [conservative] values of Korea in the 1980s.” In this way, Korean American

²⁰ This along with the lack of sex education and taboo against talking openly about sex, particularly within conservative Christian circles, make Koreans particularly susceptible to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

families are impacted by remnants of traditional Confucian culture as well the seemingly opposite and rapidly changing contemporary Korean culture.

iii. Immigrant Life and Its Stresses

Economic Challenges

Although language barriers, financial pressures, and confrontations with new cultural norms, roles, and expectations have had its toll on family relations in the Korean American community, very few resources have been dedicated to serving this community. Contrary to the model minority myth of Asian Americans being wealthy, Korean Americans face many economic challenges that strain their marriages. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Koreans were one of poorest communities following Latinos, Native Americans and African Americans.²¹ Korean Americans also have the highest rate of being uninsured for healthcare. Homeownership rates are at similar low rates with African Americans and Latinos.

“In the U.S., the wife goes up in power, she shoots to the sky...meanwhile the men go down and down.”

-Korean American Pastor

Changes in Gender Roles

In addition to these challenges, adjusting to changing gender norms and expectations can be particularly difficult for the Korean American family. Korean immigrant women obtain greater freedom as they incorporate into the more gender egalitarian U.S. culture. This is particularly the case if they also work outside of the home and earn their own income. As this happens, Korean husbands lose their traditional male privileges, their power and authority within

²¹ Korean Americans' poverty rate tends to be lower than Blacks and Latinos, but noticeably higher than other Asian Americans and Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4. Produced by Eui-Young Yu and Peter Choe, Korean American Coalition Los Angeles - Census Information Center KACLA-CIC, 2003).

the family. This loss is especially damaging since they can not easily claim power and authority in the broader society as foreigners in a new country. This change in gender hierarchy and status can generate marital tensions. Looking at their Americanized peers and the broader American culture, wives may demand their husbands to show more affection, spend more time taking care of the children, and help out with household chores and challenge the husbands to give up some of the male privileges that they enjoyed in Korea.

Many Korean men have difficulty in adjusting to these new demands and expectations, particularly if they have experienced a loss in professional occupational status. Marriage educators note that some Korean men will become more controlling and even physically abusive toward their wives because their “man pride” has been hurt from the loss in occupational status, because they are no longer the dominant economic provider. Along these lines, a female elder explains that it is actually easier to “attack the husband” (i.e., demand more affection and sharing of household chores), if his professional status loss is not as notable. “If the husband is working in a small business, because his respect is not so down, he is at least making money, he is going to be more receptive to his wife’s demands (than someone who experiences a more distinct occupational downgrade).”

This kind of marital conflict, however, can vary depending on who immigrated first. In the case when the man immigrates first, which Koreans refer to as *yeo phil jong bu* (wife follows husband), everything is “OK.” It falls in line with the traditional role of the man as the financial provider and the “head” of the family. He takes the lead, and the woman follows. But when the man immigrates after the woman, many problems can ensue. The husband will have to depend on the wife for everyday matters and follow his wife’s lead. In function, the wife becomes the

head of the household and the man become almost like a temporary child. As a female marriage educator explains:

If the man comes later, then he does not know the language. His pride will get hurt. His kids will rely on [the mom] more. It will be especially difficult if he is a typical Korean guy...Korean man style. The woman can pay the bills, drive, know the directions to places, she will know the system. The man, meanwhile, continues to take a back step...step by step, he gradually becomes the fool. So he will have an affair and go to another woman who will not make him feel inferior, soothe his man-pride.

In this way, the hierarchy that places men as the protectors and providers over the subordinate women not only constrain women, but men. It can put greater strains on Korean American couples as they adjust to new gender roles and expectations in America.

Both Spouses Must Work to Make End's Meet

Many Korean Americans respond to professional downgrading by starting a small family business, where

Koreans have the highest self employment rate among all of the major ethnic groups.

both the husband and wife works. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 19.9% of Koreans were self employed compared to 9.6% for Chinese, 6.7% for Hispanics, 4.6% for Blacks, and 10.4% for Whites. The self employment rate for Koreans in Los Angeles County, 25%, is even higher and in San Bernardino County, Koreans' self-employment rate is 32%.²² The fact that both the husband and wife work in many small businesses, often working together late nights and on

²² Korean American Coalition-Census Information Center, Center for Korean American and Korean Studies, California State Los Angeles's News Release, November 22, 2002:
http://www.calstatela.edu/centers/ckaks/census/PR_112202.pdf

weekends, make it particularly difficult for Korean Americans to have healthy marriage and family relations.

In Korea, many fathers are not able to spend “quality” time with their wives and children because they have to work long hours. But at least the moms

“At least in Korea you had the mother who was there to take care of the kids and create a happy home environment for the husband and kids, but not when she is working right by her husband all day long at the shop. Who is going to be the homemaker now?”
-*Marriage Educator*

usually stayed home. The mother functioned as the mediator that connected the traditional hard working, distant, and authoritarian father with the kids. Even if the father was busy at work, the mother was with the kids before and after they came back home from school. She took care of household chores and made sure that the children were doing well in school and filled her husband in on how the children were progressing once he came home after work. In the U.S., however, many Korean mothers can not play this traditional mediating role. She has to work too. Because the mother is also busy working, she can no longer function as the mediator, the connector, the glue of the family.

The husband and wife working together for long hours also has its own problems. Many focus group respondents noted that working together can be stressful simply because most Koreans, particularly the older generation, do not have an “affection” or “love culture.” Because the men came home late from work in Korea, it was not such a problem that there was not a “love” culture between the husband and wife. But when they both work alongside each other all day long, the lack of affectionate connection becomes more obvious. It becomes more evident that the couple may not really be “together” even as they may be working right alongside one another, as a pastor explains:

For example, the husband may be at the back of the dry cleaning store and the wife may be at the front managing the counter. The husband may ask short questions about how the business is going, but that is about it. They are just two people occupying the same place. They are just two separate working machines that don't have any training on how to spend time together.... Koreans don't have any love training... They don't know how they are supposed to act when they have so much time together.

It becomes more evident that the couple may not really be “together” even as they may be working right alongside one another. This led several respondents to add that one of the couples will sooner or later want to leave and do something other than the small business so that they can have some breathing space—because all of the together time without “love training” can be stifling.

Cultural and Language Barriers: Lack of Communication Skills

Many Korean American mothers can no longer play the mediating role between the father and the children to keep the family connected. This inability is also compounded by cultural and language barriers. Most Korean American children who were

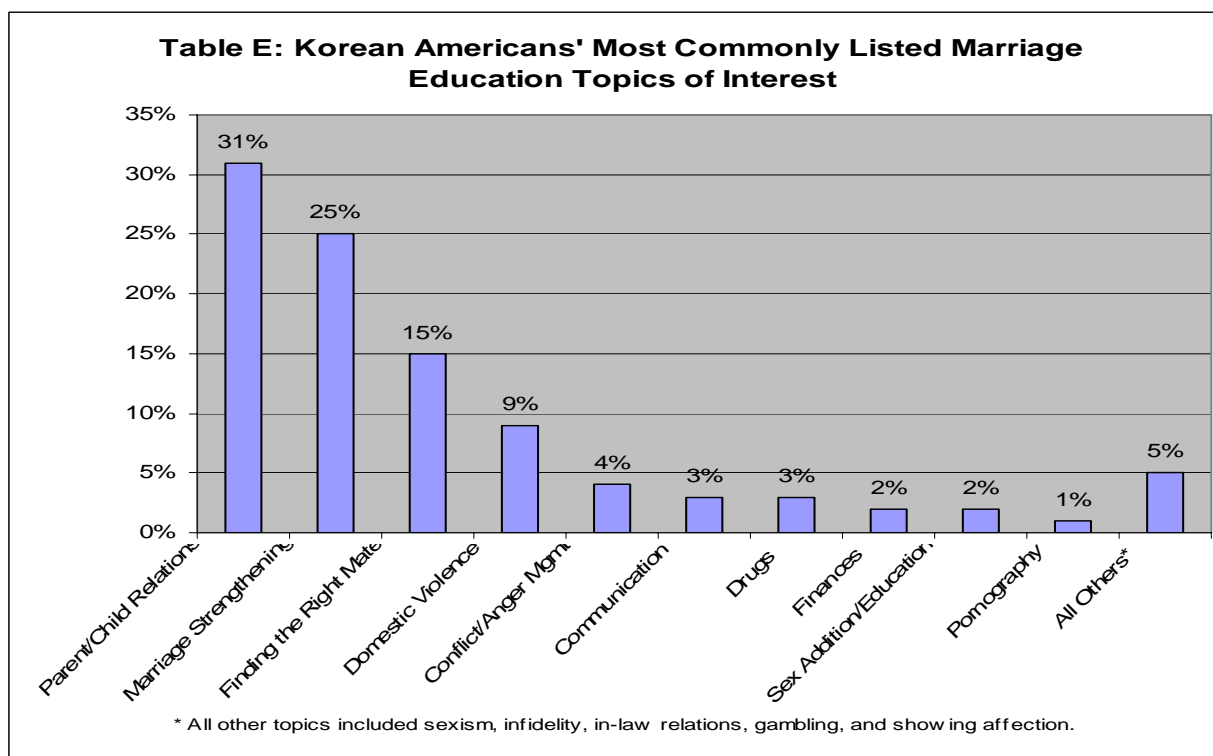
“Even if the mother and father want to talk deeply with their children and find out how they are really doing, they are often looked down upon because they are not competent in English and familiar with much of the popular American culture.”

-Marriage Educator

born in the U.S. and/or came to the U.S. at a young age, can not speak Korean well or can not speak the language at all. Meanwhile the first-generation parents have difficulty speaking English. In California, foreign-born Koreans have the highest percentage of persons with difficulty in English as compared with other Asians.²³ This means that deep conversations

²³ Korean American Coalition Los Angeles-Census Information Center's Press Release, July 18, 2003 based on the 2000 U.S. Census.

between the U.S. born and/or raised children and the immigrant parents are not possible. It is hard for parents to meaningfully converse and connect with their children and vice versa.²⁴



This kind of communication gap becomes particularly serious as children enter adolescence and become more independent from their parents. As one counselor notes, “especially when they get older and their lives get settled, the children become more and more divided from their parents. It gets greater each day as they age.” In this way, not only do mothers no longer have the time to play the mediator, they don’t have the language ability or the cultural savvy to connect with their children. Many pastors and community leaders point out that the lack of children’s connection with the father is particularly alarming. As one recounts, “The mother, at least, made food for the kids (even if she worked) and had some regular contact with the children that way. But the father, especially as he gets older, has no real connection with the

²⁴What is more, many second-generation Korean Americans grow up feeling ashamed of their culturally and linguistically limited parents.

children since he did not even have a relationship with them when they were younger.” This leads some fathers to remorse later on that they were just “money making bags” or “money making machines” that no longer have any real place in the family once they retire and the kids grow older.

Couples Living in Separate Countries for the Sake of the Children

In talking about how the experience of immigrating and settling in America affects family relations, we have to consider how the very act of immigrating itself impacts Korean families. Because of the escalating cost of educating children in Korea, many Korean parents immigrate to the U.S. to offer their children more educational opportunities. While this may not be a surprise, what is less well-known is that husbands

“90% of Korean wives will leave their husband behind if it means that they can help their kids’ education, if they can go to the U.S.”

-Korean Church Elder

and wives are even willing to live in separate countries, one in Korea and the other in the U.S., to make this happen. In the most common scenario, the mother immigrates with the children while the father stays behind in Korea and sends money to the U.S. Thus, some Koreans are sacrificing their own marriage for the sake of their children’s education.

This kind of divided family structure causes many problems. It can lead to loneliness, infidelity, and even divorce. Leading separate lives, the wives can get lonely and find another man in the States, especially if the man can help her and her children gain permanent legal status in the United States. Left behind by himself, the husband may also be lonely and seek outside sources of companionship. Marriage educators and pastors also point out that some couples immigrate already separated or divorced. Some flee to America precisely because they have marital problems. Emigration itself can be a way to escape an unhappy marriage.

Contemporary Asian American Youth Trends

In a national 1997 study, 30% of Asian American girls in grades 5 through 12 reported depressive symptoms as compared to Non-

Among women ages 15-24, Asian American women have the highest rate of suicide, more than Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.

Hispanic White (22%), Africa American (17%) or Hispanic (27%) girls.²⁵ Asian-American women consistently have the highest suicide rate of women between 15-24.²⁶ Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Asian-American women in that age range. Asian American teenage boys were also more likely than their White, Black and Hispanic peers to report physical or sexual abuse.²⁷ Asian youth delinquency is rising as well.²⁸ Additionally, a recent national study found that Asian American youth have the highest increase in smoking rates of any group from the 7th to 12th grades.²⁹ Despite this, Asian American children (under 18 years old) are least likely among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics to receive mental health care.³⁰ These trends make the changing dynamic of family relations and cultural, linguistic, and generational barriers within the Korean American community particularly alarming. It is also noteworthy that the most commonly mentioned marriage education topic that Korean Americans listed in our survey was building parent/children relations.

²⁵ *The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls*. The Commonwealth Fund, 1998.

²⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center of Health Statistics.

²⁷ *The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Boys*. The Commonwealth Fund, 1998

²⁸ <http://www.sph.umich.edu/apihealth/2006/community.htm> (accessed September 3, 2007). Most of the data on Asian youth delinquency/gang activity focuses on South East Asians. Specific data on Korean Americans are difficult to find.

²⁹ National Youth Tobacco Survey, American Legacy Foundation 2000. Much of this information can be found at: http://www.cacf.org/PDF/FS_Health.pdf and <http://naapimha.org/issues/Fact%20Sheet.pdf> (accessed September 3, 2007)

³⁰ Ku, L. & Matani, S. *Immigrants' Access to Health Care and Insurance on the Cusp of Welfare Reform*. Assessing the New Federalism. Urban Institute. June 2000. "Of all the children in New York City receiving licensed mental health services in 1995, only 1% were Asian American." (New York State Office of Mental Health. 1995. Patient Characteristics Survey. 1997 [unpublished data] as cited in *Keeping Track of New York City's Children*, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, 2000.

Isolation of Korean American Seniors

Senior citizens are the most culturally, linguistically, socially, and economically marginalized population within the Korean American community. Nearly all of the 65 years and older Korean American population are foreign-born and the majority of them can not speak English well. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, nearly three-quarters of elderly Koreans in New York City spoke English “not at all” or “not well” compared to 40% (29,454) of all Korean American adults in the city.³¹ Such linguistic limitations along with cultural barriers can disconnect them from the broader society, and even from their own grandchildren and family members. Many Korean American seniors, particularly men, have a lot of time but little to do. Korean American female senior citizens may spend their free time babysitting and helping around the house. The men, however, do not commonly take part in these activities. Not surprisingly, significant numbers of Korean American senior citizens suffer from depression and loneliness.³² According to the U.S. Census, Korean American senior citizens in California also have the highest poverty rate among all senior citizens ages 65 years and older; 17.85% of Korean American senior citizens lived below the poverty line compared to 15.17% of Blacks and 15.87% of American Indians/Native Alaskans. In Los Angeles County, the figures are even higher: 20.18% of Korean American senior citizens lived below the poverty line compared to 10.47% of the total population in the county. Further research need to be conducted on this population in relation to marriage education, but it is clear that this is a population in need of

³¹ <http://www.aafny.org/proom/pr/pr20040421.asp>

³² “Depression is overrepresented among elderly Asian Americans, with 40 percent of them reporting symptoms of the condition- a higher incidence than for the general elderly population.” Asian American Elders in New York City: A Study of Health, Social Needs, Quality of Life and Quality of Care (2003) <http://www.aafny.org/proom/pr/pr20030219.asp>; “Asian American elders show a greater prevalence of dementia than the general population.” Browne, C, & Broderick, A. (1994) “Asian and Pacific Island Elders: Issues for Social Work Practice and Education.” *Social Work*. Vol. 39 (3) 252-259.

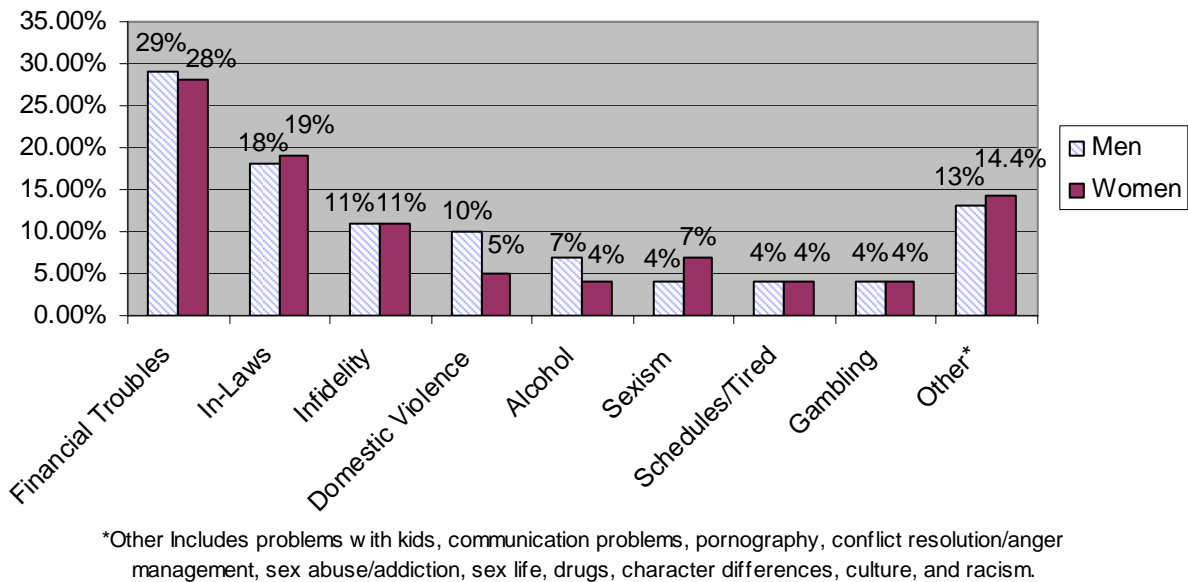
greater social services and marital/familial support. This is especially the case since conflict with in-laws is one of the most common problems within the Korean American family.³³

iv. Most Common Sources of Marital Conflict

The most significant source of marital conflict for the Korean Americans in our study was financial troubles, followed by problems with in-laws. Financial conflicts complicated by cultural barriers and the difficulties of starting a new life in America strain Korean American marriages. Problems with in-laws can also be more acute among Korean Americans given the patriarchal culture and the value placed on sons within traditional Korean culture. Beyond these two major sources of conflict, infidelity, domestic violence, alcohol abuse and sexism were commonly mentioned. As previously noted, infidelity is becoming more commonplace and accepted within contemporary Korean culture. Stresses of immigration, the clash between traditional patriarchal culture and changing gender roles, and new financial challenges can make domestic violence, alcohol abuse, and sexism even more pronounced in Korean American marriages.

³³ The traditional Korean cultural expectation that the adult children should take care of their aged parents and live with them can further strain Korean Americans' marital relations. This is especially the case if the family lacks the financial resources to support their elderly parents. Lack of health care and physical illness can compound these problems.

Table F: Most Commonly Cited Sources of Conflict in Korean American Marriages



C. Scarcity of Marriage Education & Support Services in the Korean American Community

i. Limited Resources Available

Limited marriage education and support services exist in the Korean American community. In the individual survey, the most commonly mentioned marriage/family support services were through churches. While no specific programs were mentioned, respondents listed Bible studies and general marital as well as pre-marital counseling services. In the church and community leaders' survey, about a third or 7 out of the 22 leaders noted that their organization had some form of a marriage/family education program and/or annual seminar. The mentioned programs included pre-marital education, "Father School/Mother School," Bible studies related to marriage, general family counseling, parent education classes, and annual family seminars.

While these programs were mentioned, very few Korean American churches have any regular marriage-related programs.³⁴

Aside from general Bible studies and marriage/pre-marital counseling, the most commonly named specific marriage-related program by both the survey and focus group respondents was Father School. Father School, along with less known Mother School, were the only specifically named programs that were not directly related to a church. Having started in Korea in 1995, Father Schools are now held in 43 cities across the United States. A typical Father School session meets four times during weekends for 6 hours for education, lecture, and discussion on fatherhood for a fee of \$120.00. On average, around 50 to 60 Father School sessions per year are held across the United States. When asked what marriage/family education programs and services individuals actually used and found helpful, most answered Father School. Many noted that going through Father School was an eye-opening experience. It was also noted, however, that it would be better if these programs could be offered more regularly so that it could be more than a “good memory” or a temporary fix for the participants. In its current state, Father School (the full name is Father School Mission Center) does not have an on-going follow up classes that can continuously help men to develop their parenting and marriage skills. Father School, in any one area, is usually offered once a year if at all.

Besides Father School and its counterpart Mother School, no other specific support program or service was mentioned by both the survey and focus group respondents. While individuals mentioned that they heard or knew of some form of a “marriage education” program, they could not name any particular program or provide further information on the programs.

³⁴ It should be stressed again that the church leaders that took part in our study are a select population; they are unique in that they were interested enough about marriage education/strengthening to agree to take part in our study. Consequently, they may be more likely to have marriage education programs and have more favorable attitudes toward such programs than many of the other church leaders that did not accept our invitation to participate in our study.

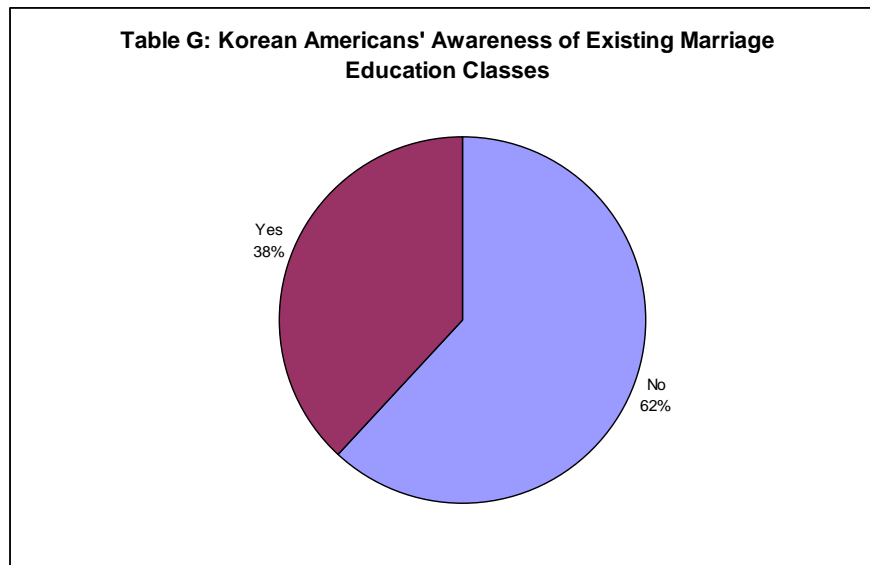
Moreover, none of the respondents acknowledged any of the marriage and family support services that are currently available within the Korean American community. No one mentioned the Korean American Family Service Center, Asian Pacific Counseling & Treatment Centers, Korean American Family Counseling Center, Korean Community Service, or Home on the Green Pastures³⁵ (a center for battered Korean women); all of these centers have programs and services that support Korean American families, most commonly in the area of domestic violence and counseling. A few noted that they know that “some sort of community center” may be available for support, but did not know what if anything was actually available. What was more disturbing was that many of the pastors and community leaders did not know of these services. Knowledge of legal support related to family issues like domestic violence or child abuse, like the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, was also absent. Thus, this research highlights a major barrier that must be addressed in supporting healthier marriages within the Korean American community—lack of access to information and knowledge.

ii. Lack of Investment of Marriage Resources for Korean American Community

Asian Americans, including Korean Americans are generally categorized as model minorities who are affluent, hard working, law-abiding, and from stable two-parent homes. This kind of public image contributes to the relative lack of marriage education and family investment and support in the Asian American community by government and other funders. In contrast to other minority groups like African Americans and Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, particularly East Asian Americans, are given little support. Given this and the language and

³⁵ Home on the Green Pastures, however, is overloaded. Marriage educators recounted how battered Korean women are even turned away from the center because it is too crowded. This is problematic because Korean women do not wish to go to non-Korean centers for help because of language and cultural barriers. The marriage educators and counselors in our study also note that Green Pastures may be the “only” organization that specifically helps battered Korean women in the entire U.S. (Author’s note: This is not true – there are a few centers that provide services to battered Korean women. The fact that marriage educators and counselors have this perception reflects that even professionals have partial knowledge and access to the existing, albeit limited, resources.)

cultural barriers that the community faces, it is not surprising that many of the Korean Americans in our study were not aware of available resources for marriage/family support. 62% of the survey respondents answered that they were not aware of any marriage education classes. (Table G) Additionally, those who answered that they were aware of marriage education programs offered only vague responses like “marriage education” “counseling” and “Bible studies.”



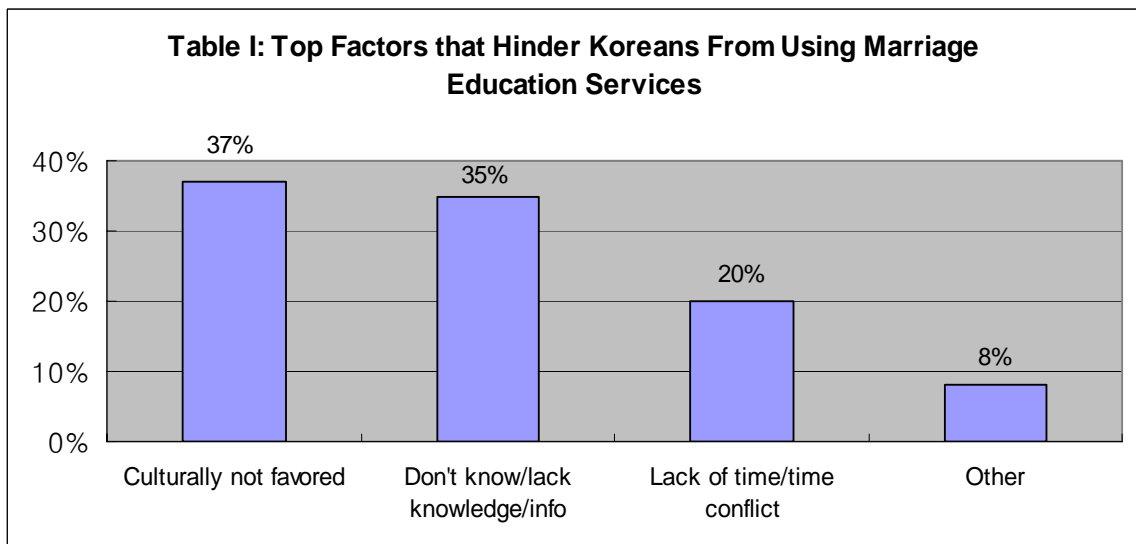
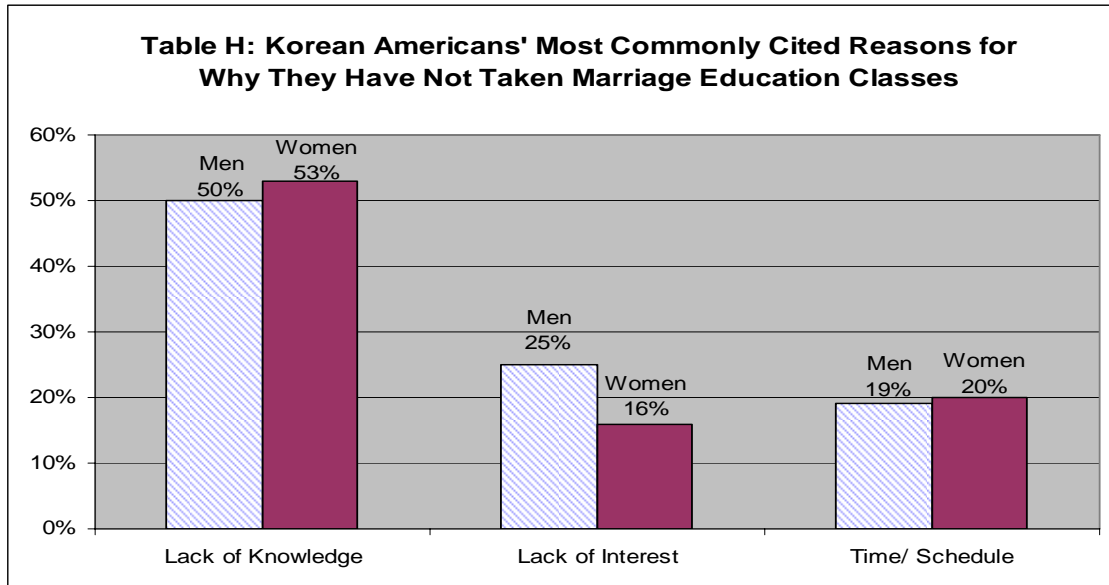
D. Barriers that Hinder Korean Americans from Obtaining Marriage Support

i. Limited Access to Marriage Information and Resources

The most commonly cited reason for not having taken marriage education classes among married couples was lack of knowledge and information. (Tables 5 and H) Pastors and

The top reasons for “not having taken any marriage education classes” among married couples was “don’t know of available programs, lack of information/and or opportunity.”

community leaders also commonly gave the same explanation for why more Korean Americans do not take marriage education courses.



ii. Negative Perceptions of Marriage Education

After lack of knowledge, pastors and community leaders cited Korean culture as a factor that hinders Koreans from using marriage education services. Of the various responses to

the question, “What hinders Koreans from using marriage education services?,” “culture” or

“Asian culture is a hiding culture, people don’t want to bring shame upon themselves or their family members, they would rather bear it and keep it in.”
-Korean American Pastor

“culturally not favored” was the most often cited reason in the general surveys. Out of all of the responses to the open ended questions, the response to the question on what hinders Koreans from using marriage education services was the highest.³⁶ The majority of the written comments referred to culture and Koreans’ general negative perception of marriage education and counseling in general. Some of these comments are:

“I believe the Korean culture discourages sharing personal issues with those outside of the family. There is the sense that strangers, counselors included, should not be privy to what happens in the family. And also, Koreans (especially men) are not accustomed to sharing their feelings or opinions on personal matters.”

“I think usually Koreans do not want to share their marriage problems to others. Many think they are personal problems. It hinders us from using marriage education services. And **many of us do not know what kind of marriage education program we can use.**”³⁷

“Cultural stigma is probably the strongest factor. **Marriage education connotes solving marital problems which means admitting there is a problem in the first place.** If marriage education did not have that meaning, this would not be a major hindrance.”

“It is culturally not favored; **Koreans are raised not to talk about their problems outside the family. We have to save face in front of society and others to make it appear that we are always happy and doing well. There is a stigma that marriage education services are only for those who are getting married and after marriage it is only for those people who are having problems.**”

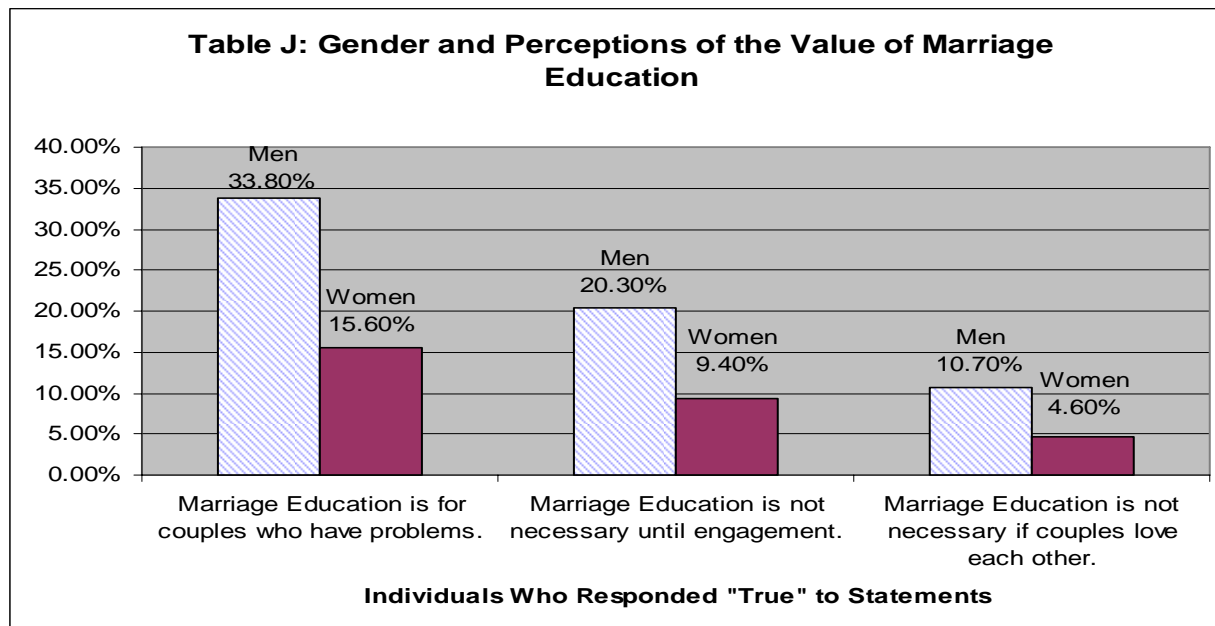
“**For Koreans talking about their family problems is like shooting themselves, like attacking themselves, their own person. It is a shame so even for example if there is illness in the family... they will not talk about it with others. Basically talking about your family problems is like slapping yourself in the face, it does no good.**”

In this way, “culturally not favored” was essentially connected to the problem of shame, the importance of saving face, and not exposing one’s own personal family problems to others. Marriage educators also noted that it is common for Korean women who visit their counseling

³⁶ The second-generation, however, have a more positive outlook on marriage education compared to the first-generation.

³⁷ The emphasis in bold is added by the author.

centers to commonly say (in Korean) “I ended up having to even come here.” This is not the best translation of the Korean phrase, but it communicates that they had to even resort to coming to a counselor because their problems were so severe. Thus, if Korean Americans seek out marriage support, it is as a last resort, because they have no other place to turn.



“Marriage Education is for Couples with Problems”

The perception that marriage education classes are for those who are in “troubled” relationships is a prevalent misperception by many Korean Americans – but especially by men. About a

“If you tell a Korean man that he needs marriage counseling, he is going to take that as a direct insult, assault to his character.”
-Korean American Pastor

third of the men answered “True” to the statement, “Marriage education is for couples with problems.” (Tables J and 3) According to our focus groups and survey, many men commented that they would take it as a direct insult and an assault to their character and integrity if invited to

such a class. One survey respondent stated, “Culturally, Korean men are very sexist and feel that they are the head of the household... Often that means to them that they have to be dominant and to go to counseling would be to admit that they had some type of deficiency.” Additionally, nearly half of the survey respondents did not agree that “Koreans have a positive attitude toward marriage/family education classes.”

The culture of shame, saving face and the negative cultural perceptions of marriage education prevent many Korean Americans from seeking marriage support. The finding that the area where married Korean Americans responded most negatively in regards to their marriage was social support is also revealing.

Nearly half of the survey respondents did not agree that “Koreans have a positive attitude toward marriage/family education classes.”

Only 62.1% of the men and 57.3% of the women agreed that they “can turn to other couples/people for relationship support.” (Table 2)

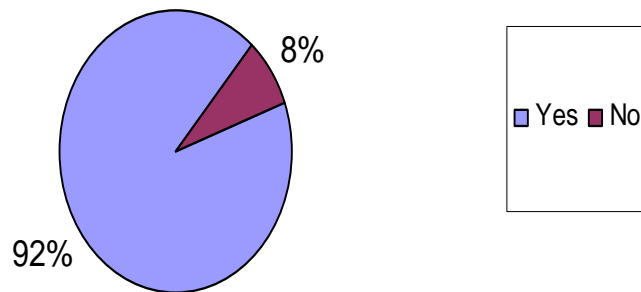
E. Korean American Community’s Need and Desire for Resources to Build Healthier Marriages

While many of the stated cultural social barriers exist, 81% of the survey respondents still answered “True” that “Most Korean families could use some marriage/family education courses.” Pastors and community leaders also all agreed that more marriage education support and service are needed in the Korean American community. In Table 14b, 92% of the pastors who responded to the question, “Would you be interested in joining a coalition of partners running different marriage/family programs to create a more comprehensive marriage/family service?” (11/12) answered that they were interested. Since KCCD has reached out and educated the community on the importance and the benefit of marriage education, there has been a marked

increase in activity and interest in marriage instructor certification classes as well as participant classes. Over 100 pastors and organizations have signed onto be members of KCCD's Healthy Marriage Network to support and promote marriages within the Korean/Asian American community.

Over 80% of the survey respondents answered "True" that "Most Korean families could use some marriage/family education courses."

Table K. Percentage of Pastors Interested in Joining Marriage/Family Program Partnerships (N=12)



IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR BETTER MARRIAGE/FAMILY SERVICES

A. Strategies for Increasing Participation and Overcoming Barriers

Based on our research, the following recommendations and strategies are provided to strengthen Korean American marriages and overcome cultural barriers and negative perceptions of marriage education.

Educate Community on Positive Benefits of Marriage Education and Healthy Marriage

i. Educate Community on Positive Benefits of Healthy Marriage Education & Promote Marriage Education as a Tool to Build “Happier” and “Healthier” Marriages

Educate Community on Practical Benefits of Healthy Marriages

First, an effective outreach campaign needs to be implemented to educate the community on the practical benefits of having a “healthy” marriage. Connections between healthy marriages and couple’s physical and emotional health, work-life, wealth, longevity and their children’s well-being and success can be made.

Link Marriage Education as a Tool to Healthy Marriage

Second, outreach campaigns need to educate the community that marriage education can help build healthy or healthier marriages. The myth that marriage education is just for “troubled” couples must be dispelled. Marriage education should be linked with healthy versus troubled marriages.

Market Marriage Education to Leaders as a Tool for “Others”

One of the ways we can encourage participation in marriage education programs and counteract the negative perception of marriage education is to promote marriage education training programs as a tool “leaders” should acquire to help “other” families. For example, elders in the church can be encouraged to take marriage education courses not only for their own benefit but really for the benefit of the church and community members that they mentor and influence.

“We should encourage Koreans to take marriage education programs not just for themselves, but for others in their community.”

-Korean American Pastor

Avoid Negative Associations & Package Classes in the Positive

Community leaders shared many cases where they failed to attract participants to their classes because their program titles had such words as “divorce,” “domestic violence,” and “anger management.” They cautioned that Koreans are highly sensitive to associating themselves to any class or group that they perceive will reflect negatively on themselves. Consequently, even if these topics are addressed in the marriage education classes, advertisements should avoid using such descriptions. Rather, promoting classes around broadly titled subjects such as “In Pursuit of Healthier Marriages” or “Successful Family Life” will significantly increase the likelihood of participation.

Showcase Celebrity Model Couple Marriages

Providing workshops in which “model” married couples talk about their own marriage problems and solutions can effectively counteract

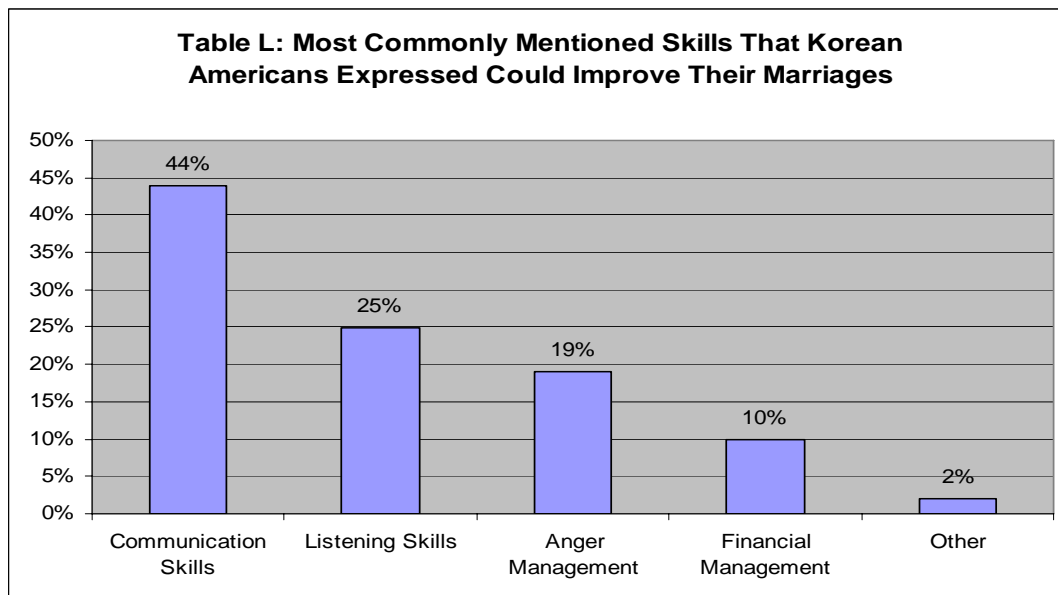
“If someone famous, someone impressive came out and talked about how they have marriage problems too and how they overcame them, then you would listen and feel good and reflect about your own marriage too.”

-Korean American Male

negative perceptions of marriage education. It can reinforce the reality that every couple has marital challenges but that those challenges can be overcome with marriage education. One male participant commented, “If someone famous, someone impressive came out and talked about how they have marriage problems too and how they overcame them, then you would listen and feel good and reflect about your own marriage too.” In South Korea, this model has been successfully implemented by a Christian celebrity couple whose marriage seminars have been quite successful and popular.

Promote Practical Skills Learning and Transferability of Skills to Other Relationships

The top most commonly stated skill that our participants noted would improve their marriages was communication skills. The other top three skills included listening skills, anger management and financial management skills. Consequently, packaging marriage education classes around the acquisition of practical benefits and skills (e.g., a class on “Successful Family Communication Skills,” or “Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Your Business and Family”) can help draw individuals who desire to effectively communicate with their spouses as well as their children, relatives, co-workers and even their customers. Courses on “positive” or “effective” communication development can also address the problems that many Korean Americans have with verbal abuse.



Make Marriage Education Exciting

Finally, one time events can be used to hook or attract Korean Americans who might not be

“Use impressive one-time gatherings to hook men, to draw them into marriage education.”

-Korean American Pastor

interested in taking extensive marriage education classes. Exciting one time events at desirable locations with popular speakers can draw many participants and can be used to positively change perceptions of marriage enhancement programs. Attendees can then be encouraged to sign up for more extensive marriage strengthening programs.

ii. Address Unique Cultural Considerations, Including the Mother-In-Law Factor:

Incorporate or Develop Programs that Address Cultural Family Factors & Challenges

Marriage education programs and curriculums for Korean Americans must address the unique cultural challenges that Korean American families experience. Many marital conflicts stem from hierarchal, patriarchal relationships between husbands and wives, as well as from strain with other family members, such as in-laws and children. Consequently, marriage education classes and outreach and educational campaigns need to demonstrate the benefits of respecting and valuing partners of both sexes while being attuned to the traditional cultural gender relationships. It is also important to consider how the culture of shame as well as ever-changing gender expectations can complicate marital problems such as domestic violence and alcohol abuse.

Provide Anonymity and Safe Environment for Seeking Help

Because of the Korean American community's culture of shame and resistance to revealing one's problems, providing safe alternatives and environments for seeking assistance will be critical to success. Specifically, safe and even anonymous service options such as on-line classes and counseling via phone as well as marriage education radio shows and educational programs on video are possible options.

Counteract South Korean Drama Influence & Provide Other Alternatives

Beyond traditional culture, the negative influence of contemporary popular Korean culture, such as Korean dramas, on Korean American marriages should be counteracted. Korean media can be a powerful tool for counteracting negative marital images, such as through the use of positive PSAs about marriage.

Provide In-language and Culturally Sensitive Programs

As many monolingual Koreans are dependent on Korean media, providing alternative forms of entertainment and unique educational opportunities would strengthen marriages in the Korean American community. Providing marriage education materials that are culturally and linguistically friendly to the Korean American community will also help further participation and engagement. Consequently, greater investments in marriage education resources for the Korean American community are needed.

iii. Focus Classes on Improving their Children's Success & Relationship

Another important strategy in reaching Korean couples is to encourage Korean Americans to take marriage education programs for the sake of their children. Couples can be

“If you tell Koreans that having a healthy marriage is tied to their children’s academic success, their kids doing well, they will listen. They will definitely listen.”

-Korean American Community Leader

educated that having a healthy marriage is essential for having healthy children. Taking part in marriage education programs and strengthening their own marriage can increase their children’s academic achievement and positively contribute to their children’s emotional, social, and

psychological well-being. For example, they can pick up communication development skills and ways to spend “quality” fun time as a family through marriage strengthening courses. Given that much of the marital conflicts that Korean Americans have involve their children and considering the high value that Korean parents place on developing their relationship with their children, it is important to equip parents and couples with resources to help their children.

The Korean Americans in our study expressed significant interest in developing parent/child relations, even over their own spousal relations.

iv. Target Special Efforts to Attract Korean American Men & Allay their Fears

Korean American men, including those sampled in our research, have lower knowledge of the benefits and importance of marriage education and have more negative attitudes towards marriage education compared to their female counterparts. A strong perception that Korean men have about marriage education is that it is set up to attack them. Many Korean American men are reluctant to seek out marriage education courses because they believe that they will be put in a situation where they will be assaulted by their wives and/or the educator and required to do most of the changing. In some respects, this perception is understandable.

“I can just imagine the wife pointing and shaking her finger at her husband while the husband shrinks further and further back in front of the marriage counselor.”
-Korean Church Elder

Nearly all of marital problems mentioned by our focus group participants were directed at men. Common sources of marital problems mentioned in relation to men included gambling, drinking, infidelity, pornography, drugs, sexual abuse, domestic violence, problems with anger, communication, and an

“Women go up in America, and men retreat, feel inferior, feel like they are a target. So we need to take care of men...provide a place for them to go when they feel like they are retreating and have no where else to turn.”
-Korean American Pastor

inferiority complex. The only problems that respondents noted were more problematic for women related to not respecting the husband, nagging, and not properly taking care of household duties. These problems were not viewed as seriously as the marital problems mentioned for men. Moreover, many problems that were connected to women still indirectly point to men, such as not respecting husbands and nagging. Understandably, without education, Korean men would assume that marriage education would force them to make significant changes. Consequently, marriage education classes and outreach need to take “special care” of men. This is particularly the case since men experience a greater sense of loss in authority and status upon immigration than women.

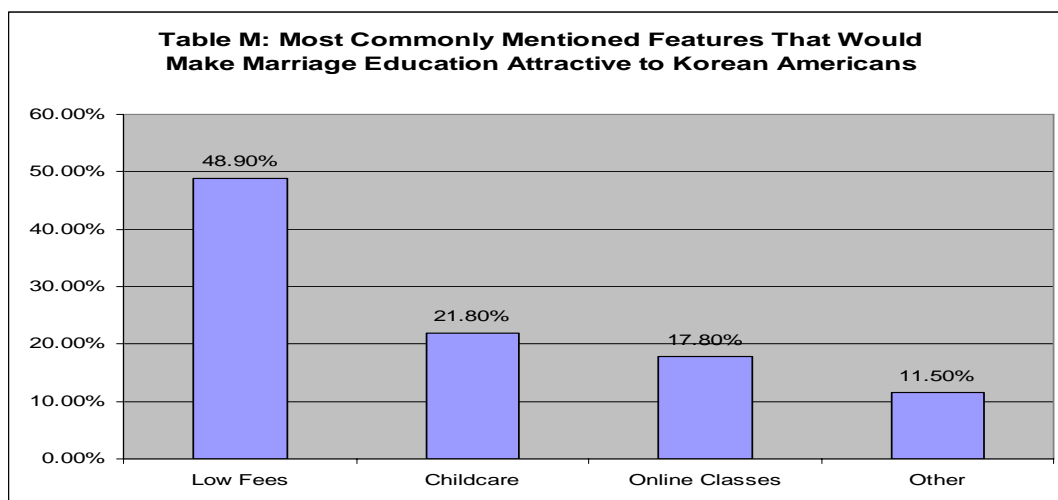
To take special care of the men, marriage education classes and terminologies need to be more inviting to men. For example, marriage counseling can be called marriage “coaching.” This type of name change should not be underestimated. The popular program, Father School, was at first called “Couple’s School” but because few men responded positively, (many thought that it would be a school where they would get attacked by their wives or counselors for being insufficient husbands) the name was later changed to “Father School,” which noticeably increased men’s participation. Today, Father School is located in over 27 countries and 35 states in the United States.

Also using program titles that appeal to men’s interests such as, “How to be a successful man” would be more effective. One pastor gave an example of how drawn he and other men were at a Promise Keeper’s gathering when the speaker came onto the stage on a motorcycle and spoke in a way that easily grabbed their attention. The gathering had activities like rock climbing sessions and appealed to some of men’s common interests, such as sports, motorcycles, and cars.

In addition, the traditional primary role of Korean men as financial providers and noninvolved in other aspects of the family have left men without a place in the family once they stop working. Consequently, educating men on ways they can expand their role beyond the financial provider and deepen their relationships with the family members can be appealing. Men can be taught to develop skills to positively communicate with their spouses and children and learn how they can spend quality time with their families. PSAs can also be used to provide models of happy families with great fathers who are communicative, involved, respected, and loved.

v. Top Factors That Attract Korean American Community Participation: Time, Location, Flexible Schedules, Low Fees, Childcare, and “Good Korean Food”

Our research also looked at what other factors could increase Korean Americans’ participation in marriage education classes. The most commonly selected factor (nearly 50%) that would make marriage education more attractive to Korean Americans was low fees. Childcare was second followed by the option to take on-line classes. Thus, making available classes with low fees and childcare would be important considerations.



Additionally, the best time for marriage education programs for Korean Americans were the weekends. In particular, Sunday afternoons after church hours were commonly listed as a favorable time. Churches are good places to hold marriage education programs if they intend to serve a small audience like the members of a particular church. Local public schools or community centers were suggested as better venues for programs that seek to draw a wider audience, as some churches, particularly smaller churches, may fear their members will be drawn to start attending larger churches where the marriage programs are held. If feasible, participants commented that nice hotels create added appeal for marriage education classes. Proximity to major freeways and convenient parking were also mentioned as was the importance of having “good Korean food” at the gatherings. Finally, flexibility and accessibility of classes and accommodations were noted as factors that could accommodate the schedule of many busy Korean American couples who must both work full time.

vi. Centralize Information Network for Marriage Education Programs and Counselors

Creating a central network with a master list of available marriage education programs and counselors can help Korean Americans to access marriage resources. This information can be featured on a website and made available for the general public. Information about the website and its resources can be spread using flyers, posters, and PSAs. It is important to have this type of extensive resource network available on-line because many Korean Americans would rather request assistance from someone they do not know personally, rather than someone they are already acquainted with. Discretion is highly desired.

On the central website, it would be beneficial to have a list of counselors, along with their specializations, qualifications, contact information, and religious affiliation, as personal counseling was the most popular marriage support program cited. The website can feature other resources, such as readings, CDs, tapes, radio programs, and books. It would be helpful if Korean Americans could freely download or purchase marriage education resources and on-line marriage education programs from the privacy of their homes. The central network should offer resources that address some of the other common sources of problems within Korean American marriages, such as financial conflicts, parent/child relations, domestic violence, alcohol, drugs, gambling, adultery, and pornography. Information on centers and programs that actually offer aid and support for Korean Americans suffering from alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling, sexual problems, and domestic violence should also be made available. Additionally, the website can help to decrease the stigma that surrounds these issues by reporting the frequency with which many Korean American couples deal with similar problems. Information on these common problems as well as sources of support to combat these problems can be available in the central network. This website will help Korean Americans to know that they are not alone and that help is available. Pastors can also easily use the central website to refer their congregants to additional marriage/family support.

B. Building Strategic Partnerships with Key Institutions in Korean American Community

The following key institutions have been identified as important partners to build stronger families within the Korean American community.

i. Utilize Ethnic Korean Media: T.V., Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, and the Internet

Because of their limited English ability, Korean immigrants rely heavily on Korean ethnic media for news and entertainment. Consequently, utilizing these available media outlets to change the image of marriage education programs in the Korean American community, as well as to advertise about available marriage education resources would be effective. PSAs on happy marriages can also be used to a) change the negative perception of marriage education; b) communicate the need for marriage education; and c) to provide easily accessible information on available programs and services.

Focus group participants were asked what types of commercials and PSAs most attracted Korean Americans. Korean Americans were drawn to positive, family-oriented commercials and PSAs that showed happiness and success, such as the *Samsung* commercial that depicts a father getting a hug and verbal affection from his daughter after a long day of work. Other commercials with positive messages include those by *Korean-Air*, which depict happy families and individuals traveling and enjoying one another's company. Anti-drug PSAs also successfully utilized happy families, focusing particularly on children's well-being as a reason for getting help for one's drug addiction. Similarly, a marriage education PSA should provide a model of a happy and ideal Korean American family and suggest that the model is something that others can have as well. Given that the most commonly listed topic of interest for marriage/family seminars was parent/child relations, effective commercials should focus on the healthy benefits that marriage education can have on children. This is a message that psychologist and sociologist also confirm.³⁸ These positive images can be followed with a phone number and/or a central website that offers more information on marriage education programs and support.

³⁸ *Why Marriage Matters, Second Edition: 26 Conclusions from the Social Sciences.*
<http://www.americanvalues.org/html/r-wmm.html>

In addition to television, similar messages can be disseminated via various Korean Radio stations like *Radio Seoul* and *Radio Korea*. Many Korean Americans listen to Korean radio programs while they drive to and from work (before 8 a.m. and between 4-6 p.m.). Additionally, those that are self-employed also watch Korean television or listen to Korean radio programs while they work. Similarly, Korean language newspapers that are circulated in major U.S. cities, such as *Korea Central Daily* and *Korea Times*, also represent a likely venue for dispersing information about marriage education. Newspapers can feature the benefits of established programs, such as Father School, and list other local marriage education resources. During the month of May, when Korean Americans and Korean American churches celebrate Mother's Day and Children's Day, newspapers can feature special articles on ways to build happier families and provide information about available marriage strengthening programs. Similar articles can be published in Korean American magazines like *KoreaAm*, which is geared towards English speaking second-generation Korean Americans.

ii. Partner with Korean Churches and Pastors

The Korean American church serves as a gateway to American society for Korean immigrants. In Los Angeles alone, there are over 1,000 Korean churches, eight of which are mega-churches with average attendance numbers exceeding 3,000 members. Some have as many as 8,000 members. Among post-1965 immigrants, Koreans demonstrate the highest percentage of

There are now approximately 4,000 Korean American churches providing counseling, job assistance, after-school programs, Korean language classes, youth-at-risk programs, senior citizen services, and more.

The Korean American church serves as a gateway to American society for Korean immigrants.... over 70% of Koreans attend church weekly.

Protestant affiliation — over 70% of Koreans attend church weekly. The Korean church is the heart of the Korean American community. Thus, partnering with churches is essential.

Getting Pastors on Board

In the Korean American community, pastors greatly influence the thoughts and attitudes of Korean Americans. Consequently it is crucial to educate pastors on the benefits and importance of marriage education as well as to provide training and resources so that pastors can connect their congregants to available programs and support in promoting healthy marriages. There are some barriers and challenges that must be addressed, however. Like other Korean Americans, many pastors hold negative perceptions of marriage education programs and are influenced by the cultural values of shame and saving face that prevent Koreans from directly confronting difficult family issues. In addition, many pastors may have family conflicts themselves and feel unsuccessful with their own family and marital relations. Pastors are certainly not immune to marital problems. In fact, their visible leadership position in the church and the community at large can make it especially difficult for them to confront their own marital problems, overcome the desire to save face, and seek out marriage support.

There are various other factors which influence pastors to possibly hold negative attitudes towards promoting marriage

“You have to realize that much of the Korean church in its pioneering years advanced precisely because many Koreans sacrificed their personal family time to work for God and building the church.”

-Korean American Pastor

education programs in their churches. First, many Korean American churches, particularly smaller churches in their pioneering stages, advance and grow largely because many of the church members actively participate in building up the church, often sacrificing time and energy

that they could be spending with their families. Churches grow in size and strength in part because the elders and many other church members sacrifice their limited private family time for church work, including evangelizing, helping other church members in need, and planning and leading various church programs. As a result, although it is not intentionally done, there is a disincentive for pastors to encourage their members to invest in their congregants' marriage and family life. Encouraging family time might be counterproductive to the pastor's and the church's immediate goal of growing their church. This is especially the case for smaller churches that rely heavily on lay leaders to keep the church running.

Secondly, pastors secretly fear that prioritizing marriage/family support programs as part of their ministry may attract only

"The secret fear among pastors is that if they focused on marriage education/programs, only problem couples will crowd their churches and eventually bring the rest of the church down."

-Marriage Counselor

"troubled people." Without a support system and resources, troubled couples can have a negative financial, social, emotional, and spiritual impact on the church. As a pastor of a pioneering church frankly shared: "We can barely get by as is, so if we focused on helping troubled families, we would totally go out of business." If even two couples that had troubled marriages joined our (small) church, we would go down, be no more." The same sentiment was also shared by larger churches as well. As a marriage educator confessed, "When we tried to make marriage education more of a focus at our church [which is one of the largest Korean churches in the U.S.], the pastor did not want it. He said it would only cause more problems. The pastor actually told me straightforwardly that if the church makes the ME (marriage education) program their main thing, there will only be more problems."

The financial and resource burden for implementing such programs on churches who have limited resources were also a consideration. There was a real fear that if many couples with domestic violence came to the church or if couples who are already at the church more freely shared their problems, the church may have to provide more practical assistance to their members. One of the pastors noted that it can cost the church about \$4,000 to help a married couple with serious problems like child and/or domestic abuse. If there is talk of divorce or separation, the church may have to help with immigration status matters and legal fees. In cases of domestic violence, pastors may have to help find shelter and lodging for the woman and involve government agencies and lawyers. Everything can become more complicated. This is particularly the case considering many churches compete for more members and would naturally want to have happy healthy looking families represent their churches.

Responding to the Pastors' Concerns

"Focus on the Positive Aspects of Marriage Education"

In response to these concerns, focusing on the positive aspects of marriage education programs will be an important way to dispel the misconception that marriage education is only for troubled couples. While marriage education benefits troubled couples, other programs such as pre-marital counseling, children's education, and Father School and Mother School, can support existent healthy families and prevent or minimize future marriage conflicts. These programs can support and nurture healthier family structures, which can lead to the construction of healthier churches. Paying attention to family relations more regularly can strengthen existent marriages, prevent divorce, improve relations with children, and advance children's future success in their own marriages. For example, programs on how families can spend better quality time together

and develop a fun and unified family “play” culture in and outside of the church can be pursued. Given that many second-generation Korean Americans find the immigrant church to be disconnected from their real needs,³⁹ these types of family building programs may also be good for the long term sustainability of the church.

“Counter the lack of knowledge and information on marriage support”

Many pastors, particularly in smaller churches, lack information on available resources that can support marriages. Thus, in dire situations where immediate action is needed, such as in situations of sexual abuse or domestic violence, most pastors can only pray with the couple and ask them to pray and read the Bible. As one marriage educator that works with local churches pointed out: “[The pastors] close it down, shut it down...pastor just say ‘let’s pray....and shut down the problem.’” Prayer can be helpful, but pastors also need to be made aware that there are other services available outside the church, such as shelters for battered women, professional counselors, and legal aid. In order to ensure that congregants receive necessary services, pastors need to be made aware of the resources available in the broader community. In this way, pastors will not have to handle serious situations of domestic violence and sexual abuse alone.

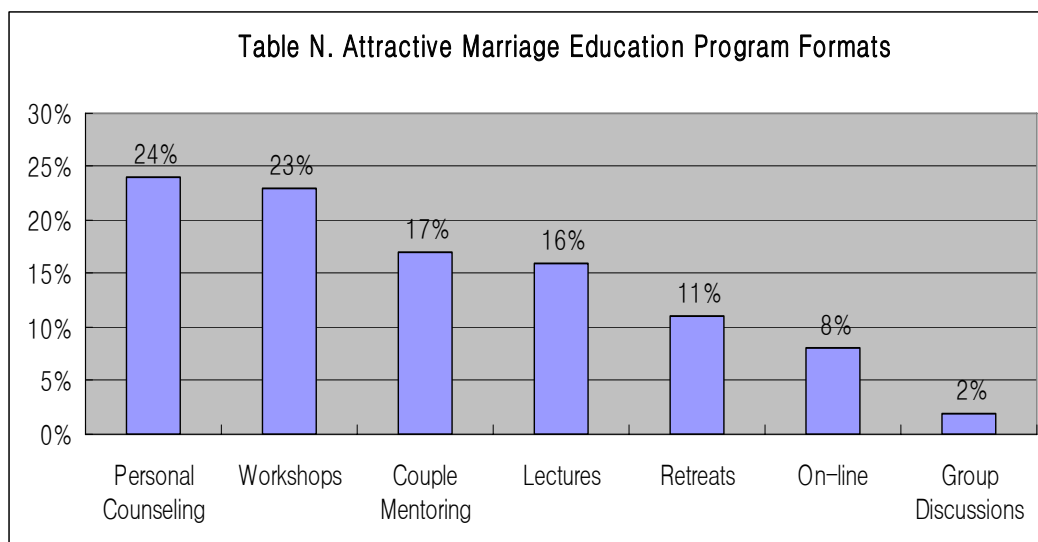
“Incorporate Marriage Education into the Church Programs”

Partnering with churches, marriage education can be incorporated into the church curriculum and positioned as a program for everyone instead of merely a program for troubled couples. For example, requiring marriage education as part of the church’s leaders training

³⁹ Chai, Karen. 1998. Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church. Pp. 295-331 in R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (eds.), *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Kim, Rebecca. 2006. *God’s New Whiz Kids? Korean American Evangelicals on Campus*. New York: New York University Press.

would be one solution. Pastors as well as lay church leaders can also be recruited and trained as marriage counselors.

Typically, Korean pastors utilize the time prior to and during Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and Children’s Day, to preach on topics related to family matters. This time period would be ideal for pastors to provide sermons on strengthening marriages and information on various resources including marriage support programs, reading materials, and videos that are available within the community.



Focus group participants mentioned the importance of marriage mentoring as well. Many of the pastors found mentor programs appealing because they offer couples a model and an immediate and consistent support group throughout their marriage. When asked “What kinds of marriage education program formats are attractive to you?” Korean Americans in the general survey also commonly mentioned couples mentoring. (Tables 13 and N) Consequently, programs that can train potential marriage mentors are needed in the Korean American community.

In training counselors as well as mentors, it must be recognized that Korean American couples' relational conflicts do not just revolve around themselves, but can involve their children, their parents, and in-laws. Marriage counseling and mentoring programs and workshops in and outside of the church must consider the collective and interconnected nature of Korean American families.

It is also possible to connect with the already established youth and English Ministry programs that exist in many churches and incorporate marriage/family education into these programs. For example, churches can provide after-school programs for youth, special family counseling, youth to youth mentoring, and young adult to youth mentoring opportunities. Youth and college ministries can be provided with research and information on alcohol abuse, smoking, suicide, sex abuse, and depression, along with information on outside resources that can provide support for these problems.

In partnering with churches, it is important to be attuned to the different needs and assets of churches, especially depending on their size and capacity. Smaller churches may be particularly in need of information as well as affordable and accessible outside resources for marriage and family support.

iii. Partnering with Senior Centers

Korean American senior citizens may be the most culturally, socially, and linguistically isolated and marginalized group within the Korean American community. Tensions with in-laws are also a significant concern among Korean Americans. This reality, along with the high value that traditional Korean culture places on the elderly, make partnering with senior citizens and senior citizen centers particularly valuable for strengthening Korean American families. Korean

“Senior Day Care” centers can disseminate information about marriage education training and family support. Seniors can also be educated and recruited to use their free time to help as marriage education coaches and volunteers. They can be invited to take part in marriage support programs and services and be given opportunities to contribute productively to the health of their families and their community. Doing so can be beneficial not only for the Korean American community at large, but also for the Korean senior citizens themselves who suffer from isolation, depression, and loneliness.

iv. Partnering with Daycares and After-School Centers

As Korean Americans place great importance on their children’s education, connecting with daycares and education providers for Korean American children will create beneficial partnerships. These partnerships can help to communicate the importance of marriage strengthening for couples as well as for children. One possible effective strategy could be including a marriage care component in the orientation programs that parents must complete prior to registering their children for day care programs. Another strategy is to work out an arrangement with the daycare centers so that enrollment fees can be waived or discounted if parents take part in a separate marriage building program in the community. At a minimum, distributing flyers and making marriage support programs known throughout daycare providers would be helpful. The same can be done at many of the popular *hakwons*, or Korean after-school academic enrichment centers for youth, in cities with large concentrations of Korean Americans.

In addition to these main centers, Korean Cultural Centers or Korean Language classes are venues for hosting programs and spreading information about available programs and services. There are over eleven hundred Korean language classes in the United States. Korean

parents who send their children to such centers to learn Korean culture and language can be exposed to available marriage education and services. Placing information and advertisements on marriage education courses as well as helpful websites on marriage support in the various businesses that relate to marriages and families can also be useful. These places include hair dressers, barber shops, wedding cake makers, wedding/family photo shops, wedding flower shops, wedding dress stores, Korean video stores, ESL schools, SAT and other college preparatory programs that service Korean Americans.

v. Partnering with Key Community Organizations

Partnering with key community organizations with large networks that are positioned to impact the community are essential to promoting healthy marriages and marriage education in the community. Korean Churches for Community Development is one such organization that has been making significant investments and have successfully partnered with various entities to achieve its success.

KCCD's Healthy Marriage Initiative Successes

In response to research indicating that children raised in households headed by married parents fare better than children who grow up in other family structures, and that individuals who have healthy marriages are healthier, wealthier, and happier, in 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) established a Healthy Marriage Initiative (HMI) to help promote and implement marriage education throughout various communities. Targeted initiatives were established for specific communities that needed additional outreach efforts. Consequently, ACF established the African American

Healthy Marriage Initiative, Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative, Native American Healthy Marriage Initiative and Refugee Healthy Marriage Initiative. However, no similar targeted investments were made in the Asian Pacific American (APA) communities.

In response to the void of investment and attention by the federal government in the Asian American community for their Healthy Marriage Initiative, in 2005, Korean Churches for Community Development (KCCD) established the Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Initiative to advocate for investments in the Asian American community and to raise awareness and train leaders to strengthen marriages in the Korean/Asian American community. Since 2003, KCCD has hosted numerous conferences and trainings across the country to educate, train and mobilize leaders for this initiative. As of April 2008, KCCD has trained over 300 future marriage educators who are church and community organization leaders in government recognized research based marriage education programs. Through KCCD's continued efforts to raise the visibility of Korean marriage education organizations and the need for marriage education in the Korean/Asian American community to key stakeholders, KCCD has been successful in opening doors for many Korean American organizations to obtain funding from California Healthy Marriages Coalition, the largest Federal grantee of the Healthy Marriage grant.

KCCD's successes and accomplishments include advocating for and hosting the Asian Roundtable at the Smart Marriages conferences since 2003. KCCD's efforts in the Asian American community was publicly recognized by then Assistant Secretary Dr. Wade Horn at the Smart Marriages Conference as well as at KCCD National Lighting the Community Conference. KCCD's success in its collaborative and advocacy efforts can be noted by the fact, that in California where KCCD is located, the only other ethnic group that is separately noted for a language program beyond Spanish is Korean. Thus far, KCCD is virtually the only organization

working in the country to organize APA communities around the issue of marriage education and instructor certification on a national level. The Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Network (APAHMN) was established to promote a culturally and linguistically competent strategy for strengthening marriages and families in the APA community.

The same year, KCCD convened the first Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Initiative Strategic Discussion Forum. At the forum, KCCD brought national marriage experts and community service providers to discuss current activity in marriage strengthening and the need for a comprehensive commitment to strengthen marriages in the Korean and Asian American community. KCCD also hosted the 1st National Korean/Asian American Marriage Day to celebrate marriage, honor healthy couples, and promote marriage strengthening service providers. Over 200 pastors, marriage service providers, educators, and families from the Korean/Asian American community gathered together for the event. In a Healthy Marriage Covenant signing ceremony, 85 pastors committed to take steps toward building healthy marriage and promoting Marriage Education (ME) in their communities.

KCCD also created the APAHMN web site (www.kccd3300.org) as a resource both for community members and organizations. The web site lists providers whose services are sensitive to the needs of Asian Americans and provides access to research on Korean/Asian marriage and family. Under a Memorandum of Understanding with *Korea Daily*, a national Korean newspaper, KCCD manages their Community Education Center, which provides Marriage Education as one of the activities for the Los Angeles/Orange County area.

In 2005, KCCD was one of the co-founding members of the California Healthy Marriages Coalition, which won the largest five year grant from the Administration for Children and Families. KCCD leveraged this opportunity to help number of Korean American marriage

education organizations in California to apply for and win grants to support marriage education. KCCD's efforts resulted in Korean Americans being identified as one of two ethnic communities that California Healthy Marriages Coalition is partnering with to provide marriage education throughout the state.

Through its work, KCCD has been able to successfully introduce and implement various government recognized marriage education programs into the Korean American community including 10 Great Dates, Foccus, Connections and Mastering the Mysteries of Love. Through its network members, other programs such as RE and Bringing Baby Home has also been implemented. One key success has been KCCD's efforts to have materials translated into Korean language including the Mastering the Mysteries of Love curriculum.

C. Develop and Expand Programs and Services

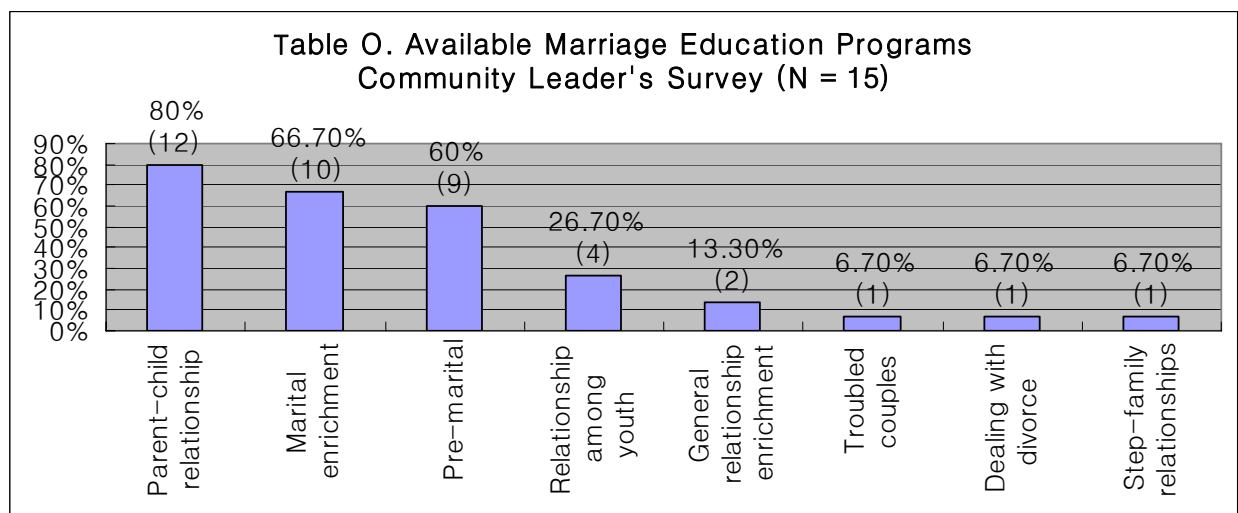
for Diverse Family & Marriage Structures

There is a significant void of programs and curriculum that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for singles, couples and families who

The most often mentioned “unmet marriage/family needs,” within the Korean American community in the focus group interviews was care for divorced and separated couples/families.

are at varying stages of life, relationships, and contexts. One of the most glaring omissions is the lack of programs for divorced, separated, and single-parent families, even though such families are fast becoming a common reality in the Korean American community. It is revealing that none of the respondents in the general survey mentioned that they were aware of any specific programs that helped divorced and/or separated couples and their children. Programs for single-parents were also not mentioned. Tables 14a as well as Table O from the church leaders' survey show how programs that help families “deal with divorce” and consider “step-family

relationships” were the programs that were the most uncommon. As one of the church community leaders who has been working as a marriage educator for 6 years passionately noted, “It is not an exaggeration when I say that there are virtually no programs that offer divorce care...there is only one church that I can think of in Southern California and you can bet that if there aren’t really any programs here, there sure won’t be any programs anywhere else [in the country].” Given that South Korea now has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, divorce and separated family care is an unmet need that must be incorporated into marriage support programs in the Korean American community.⁴⁰



In light of the many non-traditional couples that result from divorce and separation, marriage education courses must also be sensitive to couples who may not be able to attend classes together. This may occur when one parent is in Korea, as in the case when women immigrate alone with their children for their children’s education, or for parents who are

⁴⁰ One of the pastors of a large church in our focus group estimated that half of the families in his church are divorced or have remarried after a divorce.

divorced or are single parents. Marriage education programs must respond to the increasing diversity of family structures within the Korean American community.⁴¹

V. SUMMARY

The Korean American community faces unique challenges that impact the health of their marriages. Common barriers to healthy marriages in the Korean American community include patriarchal hierarchy, tensions with in-laws (particularly mother-in-laws), problems of shame and saving face, as well as broader acceptance of pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, and individualism. There are also distinct stresses related to immigration that strain Korean American families. There are language barriers, cultural generational gaps, new financial pressures, lack of family time, and changes in gender roles and expectations. Moreover, Koreans have negative cultural perceptions of marriage education programs while simultaneously lacking information on marriage education support.

Consequently, to effectively impact marriages in the Korean American community, significant investments need to be made on educating the community on the positive and practical benefits of marriage education. Special consideration should be taken in formulating outreach strategies to take into account that Korean men generally suffer greater professional downgrading and loss in authority upon immigration. Paying attention to logistic details like location, time, and setting can also help attract participants who often have long work hours and limited free time. Utilizing the multiple Korean media outlets and PSAs that reach a significantly high proportion of the community would be useful as well.

⁴¹ While this was not mentioned by the respondents in our study, Korean American marriage/family strengthening programs must also consider the growing numbers of interracial married Korean Americans within the community.

Partnerships with Korean community organizations like senior and children daycare and after-school programs as well as with local Korean businesses related to weddings and families would also be strategic in leveraging existing networks and resources. Having the support of pastors and working with local churches to build stronger families is another effective outreach and educational outlet. In addition, constructing a central information network that can be utilized to counteract the lack of information and knowledge of marriage support programs and connect the various disjointed marriage support services will be helpful. Finally, more resources need to be invested in developing a wide range of more culturally and linguistically sensitive programs, curriculum and services that can provide care to singles, couples and families at different stages and contexts. Divorced, separated, and single-parent family care, are especially in need.

VI. CONCLUSION

This report provides support that the Korean American community faces significant and unique challenges in their marriages even as they all desire to have healthy marriages. There are many barriers that prevent Korean Americans from seeking resources and assistance that may strengthen their marriage, including misperceptions about marriage education programs. It is especially important to note the significant influence that the Korean culture of shame plays in the community in their ability to reveal their marriage conflicts and seek assistance. In addition, even for those who are already open to taking these programs, there are only a limited number of available programs. Unfortunately, even these courses may not be accessible due to time conflicts, irregularity of programs, and fee costs. Moreover, there is a significant void of programs that address the unique situation of Korean Americans at different stages of life and

relationships. In reaching the Korean American community, outreach and education efforts need to take into account the unique cultural factors that impact Korean marriages and families. Partnerships with key existing powerful networks like churches, education centers, senior daycare centers and the business community will also assure success. Further research on the needs of the Korean American family, particularly diverse, single, and/or separated non-traditional families, as well as advocacy for more targeted marriage support services will be necessary. We need a diversity of culturally sensitive marriage education classes, prevention as well as crisis management, and a greater overall investment in marriage educational programs in the Korean American community.

In closing, it is our hope that through this research Korean American and other Asian American communities with similar

“Marriage education should be viewed not only as medicine, but as vitamins that can be taken regularly” to sustain good marriage health.

-Marriage Educator

cultural and immigration experiences will no longer be left out of programs, policy and funding decisions and suffer alone in their marriage problems due to shame and lack of resources. We hope that the findings of this research will dispel the model minority myth and serve as a catalyst in putting Korean and Asian American family challenges on the radar screen of policy makers, researchers, and funding agencies so that investment can be made in the Korean and Asian American community for marriage outreach, education and training. With such support, we hope to see the community come to view marriage education and strengthening not only as a fix for marriages in trouble, but as part of an expected necessary step that can sustain and strengthen healthy marriages for the long-run. Doing so can result in making great strides to building healthier marriages and families within the Korean American community and beyond.

VII. TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Summary of General Healthy Marriage Survey⁴²

	Percentages (N)
Sex	
Male	41.9% (90)
Female	58.1% (125)
Average Age	42
Some college or more	91.4% (190)
Married	70.3% (140)
Average number of children	2.1 (140)
Christian, Protestant, or Catholic	92.3% (193)
Length of Residence	
less than 10 years	29.3% (63)
more than 10 years	59.4% (127)
born in the U.S.	11.2% (24)
N	216

Source: KCCD General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁴² The sample size for each of the variables may vary depending on the response rate for each of the questions.

Table 2. “Healthy Marriage” status among married respondents by Sex⁴³

“Healthy Marriage” Indicators	Men: “Agree”*	Women: “Agree”
Enjoy each other’s company	100% (59)	92% (80)
Can trust/be honest with one another	98.3% (59)	95.3% (82)
Share in decision making	96.7% (58)	93.0% (80)
Work together to solve problems/manage conflict	94.9% (56)	92.0% (80)
Are verbally and/or physically affectionate towards one another	91.5% (54)	89.3% (75)
Can turn to other couples/people for relationship support	62.1% (36)	57.3% (48)
Resolve conflict in a positive way	91.5% (54)	86.9% (73)
Share many values together	96.6% (57)	95.3% (81)
Share responsibilities in keeping the household running smoothly	94.7% (55)	90.6% (77)
Are able to easily talk and communicate with one another	96.6% (57)	94.2% (80)
Are physically abusive and/or abused	3.4% (2)	6% (5)
Are verbally abusive and/or abused	17.2% (10)	19.1% (16)
Are happy with the level of emotional/spiritual intimacy in relationship	89.8% (53)	77.1% (64)
Are happy with the level of physical intimacy in relationship	88.1% (52)	81.2% (69)
Overall, have a happy marriage	89.7% (52)	89.3% (75)
Are interested in taking marriage enrichment or counseling classes	59.0% (45)	71.5% (60)
Are likely to take marriage enrichment classes if offered nearby	59.3% (46)	62.4% (53)

Source: KCCD General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁴³ *“Agree” includes “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”

Table 3. Attitudes toward marriage education by Sex

Answered “True”	Males Percentages (N)	Females Percentages (N)
Marriage education is for couples with problems.	33.8% (25)	15.6% (17)
You don’t need marriage education until you are engaged.	20.3% (15)	9.4% (10)
Troubled marriages aren’t salvageable.	6.7% (5)	5.6% (6)
If you love each other, you don’t need marriage education.	10.7% (8)	4.6% (5)

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

Table 4. Perception of “Other” Korean Americans’ Marriages

	Answered “True”
In my immediate family (parents, sibling, children, spouse), there has been divorce.	43.1% (88)
In my immediate family, there is someone who is having serious marriage/family problems.	48.5% (99)
Most Korean families do not think that they need marriage education courses.	43.2% (89)
Most Korean families could use some marriage/family education courses.	81% (166)
Overall, Koreans have a positive attitude toward marriage/family education classes.	54.9% (112)

Source: KCCD General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

Table 5. Reasons for not having taken marriage education among married couples by Sex

Most frequently cited reasons	Males	Females
Don't know of available programs, lack of information and/or opportunity	50% ⁴⁴	53%
Don't need it, lack of interest, recently married (not married for long)	25%	16%
Lack of time/time conflict	19%	20%
Culturally not favored	.03%	.06%
Financial reasons	.03%	.02%
Spouse did not want it	0%	.04%
N ⁴⁵	32	51

Source: KCCD General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁴⁴ I.e., 53% of what females cited as reasons for not having taken marriage education classes was lack of knowledge/information.

⁴⁵ N = the total number of reasons listed by respondents that were mentioned more than once.

Table 6. What hinders Koreans from using marriage education services?⁴⁶

Top Hinderers	Numbers of Times Listed
Culture (culturally not favored) ⁴⁷	95
Don't know/lack knowledge/no information	90
Lack of time/time conflict	51
Don't value marriage education/lack of education on its value	9
Doubt effectiveness of services	5
Financial reasons	4
Finding childcare	3
Total number of respondents	181

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁴⁶ The original question: What hinders Koreans from using marriage education services? (e.g., lack of time, finding childcare, culturally not favored, don't know of services).

⁴⁷ "Culturally not favored" also included responses like: shame, negative pressures from family members, Koreans' negative perception of marriage education.

Table 7. Top areas of conflict in marriage or family relationships by Sex⁴⁸

	Males	Females
Financial troubles ⁴⁹	29%	28%
In-laws	18%	19%
Infidelity	11%	11%
Domestic violence	10%	10%
Alcohol	7%	4%
Sexism	4%	7%
No time/Too busy/Tired	4%	4%
Gambling	4%	4%
Problems with kids	3%	2%
Communication problem	3%	2%
Pornography	1%	.4%
Conflict resolution/Anger management	1%	3%
Sex abuse/Sex addiction/Sex problems/Sex life	3%	1%
Drugs	1%	2%
Character differences	1%	1%
Culture	0	2%
Racism	0	1%
N ⁵⁰	144	238

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁴⁸The original question: What are the 3 biggest areas of conflict in your marriage or relationship with other family members? (e.g., boredom, lack of affection, lack of time together, financial troubles, infidelity, domestic violence, gambling, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual abuse, health problems, sexism, racism). If you don't have any conflict in your marriage/family, what do you think are the major areas of conflict in other Korean American marriages/families?

⁴⁹ Areas of conflict that were mentioned only once are not included in this table.

⁵⁰ N = the total number of reasons listed by respondents that were mentioned more than once.

Table 8. Awareness of Marriage Education Classes

“Are you aware of any marriage education classes? If so, please list them”	Percent (N)
Answered “No” ⁵¹	62% (80)
Answered “Yes” and/or listed a program(s)	38% (50)
Most commonly listed programs/sources of support in descending order	
<i>Bible studies, marriage education, or counseling through church</i>	
<i>Marriage education/counseling in general</i>	
<i>Pre-marital education/counseling in general</i>	
<i>Father School and/or Mother School</i>	
<i>Programs through community centers</i>	
<i>Support through college</i>	
<i>Other: newspapers, love school, communication classes</i>	
Total number of respondents	130

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁵¹ Also includes the following responses: “Don’t know” “None” “Not applicable.”

Table 9. Topics that Korean Americans want covered at marriage/family seminars⁵²

Topics of Interest	Numbers of Times Listed
Parent/child relations ⁵³	132
Marriage strengthening	109
Finding the right mate	65
Domestic violence	40
Conflict/anger management	19
Communication	13
Drugs	11
Financial management	7
Sex addiction/education	7
Pornography	6
Sexism	5
Infidelity	5
In-law relations	4
Gambling	4
How to show affection	3
Total number of respondents	178

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁵²Original question: List at least three topics that you and/or other Koreans that you know may like covered at a marriage and family seminar (e.g., conflict resolution, drug/chemical dependency, rehabilitation, domestic violence, parent/children relationships, tips for finding the right mate, tips on how to keep a marriage strong):

⁵³ This also includes cultural and generation gaps that respondents mentioned in relation to parents.

Table 10. What skills could improve your relationships with others?⁵⁴

Skills of Interest	Numbers of Times Listed
Communication skills	130
Listening skills	75
Anger management	56
Finance management	30
Other: Patience, Parenting, Cultural understanding	5
Total number of respondents	175

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

Table 11. What else would be helpful--to take marriage education classes?⁵⁵

Helpful Features	Numbers of Times Listed
Low-fees	85 ⁵⁶
Childcare	38
On-line classes	31
Other: privacy/anonymity/safety/trust	10
Other: short sessions, flexible sessions, effective classes, panel of experts	10
Total number of respondents	156

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁵⁴ The original question: What skills could improve your relationships with others? (e.g., listening skills, communication skills, anger management skills, finance management skills).

⁵⁵ The original question: What else would be helpful for you if you were to take marriage education classes? (e.g., low fees, on-line classes, childcare, etc).

⁵⁶ Only responses that were listed more than once are included in this table.

Table 12. Convenient times/days--to take marriage education classes?⁵⁷

	Numbers of Times Listed
Saturdays/Weekends in general	76
After church on Sundays	59
Weeknights	55
Total number of respondents	173

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

Table 13. What kinds of marriage education program formats are attractive to you?⁵⁸

Popular Program Formats	Numbers of Times Listed
Personal counseling	44
Workshops	42
Couple mentoring	32
Lectures	30
Retreats	20
On-line	14
Interactive group discussions	3
Total number of respondents	166

Source: General Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁵⁷ The original question: What times/days are convenient for you if you were to take marriage education classes? (Saturdays, Sundays after church, weeknights).

⁵⁸ The original question: What kinds of marriage education formats are attractive to you? (e.g., workshops, on-line programs, lecture style classes, retreats, couple mentoring, personal counseling, etc).

Table 14a. Descriptive Summary of Community Leaders' Survey⁵⁹

Currently offer any marriage enrichment/relationship skills/family strengthening...? (N=19)

Yes	36.8% (7) ⁶⁰
No	63.2% (12)

Available marriage-related program or service (past/present): Circle all that apply. (N=15)

Parent-children relationship	80% (12)
Marital enrichment	66.7% (10)
Pre-marital	60% (9)
Relationships among youth	26.7% (4)
General relationship enrichment	13.3% (2)
Troubled couples	6.7% (1)
Dealing with divorce	6.7% (1)
Step-family relationships	6.7% (1)

Who teaches in your programs? (Circle all that apply) (N=13)

Pastor(s)	69.2% (9)
Volunteer(s)	23.1% (3)
Full-time paid staff	7.7% (1)
Part-time paid staff	7.7% (1)
Other(s)	15.4% (2)

Who runs/manages your programs? (Circle all that apply) (N=13)

Pastor(s)	76.9% (10)
Volunteer(s)	23.1% (3)
Part-time paid staff	15.4% (2)
Full-time paid staff	7.7% (1)
Other(s)	15.4% (2)

Source: Community Leaders' Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

⁵⁹ Sample sizes for each of the variables vary depending on the response rate for each of the questions.

⁶⁰ Percentages (Number of respondents).

Table 14b. Descriptive Summary Continued

What are some difficulties in running the program(s)? (Circle all that apply) (N=9)

Lack of participants	66.70% (6)
Funding	44.4% (4)
Recruiting instructors	44.4% (4)
Finding bilingual (Korean/English) instructors	33.3% (3)
Finding information about ME training service providers	22.20% (2)
Finding a facility	22.2% (2)
Training facilitators or instructors	11.1% (1)
Recruiting male participants	11.1% (1)
Other	11.1% (1)

If the participation rate was lower than expected, why do you think it was low? (N=10)

Church/org. members are too busy	80.0% (8)
Church/org. members not aware of the need	40.0% (4)
Accessibility (location)	20.0% (2)
Fees for programs or materials	10.0% (1)
Other	10.0% (1)

Would you be interested in joining a coalition of partners running different marriage/family programs to create a more comprehensive marriage/family service? (N=12)

Yes	91.7%	(11)
No	8.3%	(1)

Source: Community Leaders' Healthy Marriage Survey 2007

VIII. APPENDIX

Appendix A

Marriage Research Report Problems and Recommendations Summary Chart

Problems/Issues	Report Recommendations
Contrast in perception of own marriages versus other's marriages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use objective skills self-assessment to enlighten individuals on the health of their own marriage
Confucian patriarchal hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High Domestic violence (DV) rates• Common verbal, physical abuse• High value on sons• Problems with in-laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for sensitivity to the current cultural patriarchal framework of Korean families, especially in outreaching to and working with older first generation Korean Americans• Examples in marriage education (ME) classes as well as outreach materials including Public Service Announcements (PSAs) need to demonstrate the benefits of respecting and valuing partners of both sexes• Classes on positive/effective communication• Need to look at families as a whole (e.g., in-laws)
Four highest sources of conflict: financial troubles, mother-in-law problems, infidelity, DV Other problems: alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography addictions, sexual abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that ME classes provide information on community resources• Get instructors to teach related ME on these topics• Remove stigma by informing participants of frequency of these problems in many KA marriages• Provide targeted program and outreach efforts such as PSAs that informs the community that help is available for these problems• Provide sex education
Importance of saving face/shame factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize shame factor which has significant influence on behavior and attitudes• Provide access to ME and other services by giving safe and even anonymous options, such as classes taken on-line or via T.V., or radio talk shows, or counseling hotlines• Address stigma of shame by using indirect methods to do outreach for ME (e.g., programs focusing on children to attract participants)
Korean drama transfer culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Korea has a high divorce rate• Korea has high premarital sex/adultery rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize the influence of South Korean culture through Korean dramas• Use Korean media in L.A. to counteract negative marital images with positive PSAs about marriage• Provide alternative forms of entertainment and educational opportunities especially for monolingual Koreans who are dependent on Korean media

Gender roles change after immigration Father = financial provider only No family play culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower men through education by expanding men's role with the family (not just financial provider; develop better relationships by gaining relationship skills) • Provide ME classes that teach men how to communicate and have quality fun "play" time with spouse and family • PSAs that provide models of happy families with great fathers who are involved, respected, and loved
Parents immigrate separately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ME classes for couples who may not be able to attend classes together • Examples in ME classes should also include couple models of this type
Lack of knowledge of classes that are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSAs • Partner with senior centers, childcare centers, after-school programs, churches, cultural centers, Korean businesses • Create central information hub • Make times and locations convenient and desirable
Negative perceptions of marriage education in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate that ME applies to everyone and has positive benefits to health, including physical, emotional, work-life, and children's well-being; offered for all stages of relationships • PSAs • Partner with senior centers, daycare centers, churches
Perception that marriage education is for troubled couples only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe as building "happier, healthier" marriages • Take ME for others, not just yourself • Don't use bad trigger words • Reframe using positive words • Use celebrity couples and use new formats to get rid of stigma • PSAs
Korean men think they will be attacked in ME classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care of men • Use the concept of "Coaching" • "Fish" for men, i.e., – "How to be a successful man" • Utilize outreach that appeals to men like cars, motorcycles, action movies
Both parents must work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ME can strengthen relationship between couples, even in strained contexts/environments • Make ME convenient/accessible; offer childcare with classes, on-line or ME via radio or T.V.
Problems Asian American youth have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that problems with youth are a source of strain on marriages • Through ME classes, equip parents and couples with resources to help youth • Connect with youth ministries in Korean churches, after-school programs

Korean churches don't want to prioritize spending time on family instead of church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on positives of ME; make ME part of church programs/leadership
Small churches don't have resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use marriage mentoring • Provide affordable/accessible outside resources to pastors of small churches
Pastors fear "troubled people" may be drawn to their congregations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on positives of ME; make part of church programs/leadership; use marriage mentoring • Use ME as prevention and connect with outside resources for troubled marriages
Many pastors are not equipped to deal with marriage problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give them information/ resources • Train pastors and lay leaders to be marriage counselors
Void of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate material and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services • Need for investment by greater community for ME resources in Korean community
Limited ME classes available in Korean community, i.e., - no services for divorced/separated couples; few classes for singles, few classes widely publicized to greater community, most classes not readily available or affordable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need advocacy for services for this community • Need more research on non-traditional families • Need diversity of classes • Need greater investment in ME classes in Korean community
Senior isolation due to lack of relationship skills; no resources, disconnected from family and greater society; high depression rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the unique needs of senior citizens • Provide targeted programs for seniors • Get seniors involved in marriage mentor programs
Respondents wanted more communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide communication/cultural skills • Address the prevalence of verbal abuse
Features that would make ME attractive to Korean Americans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low fees, child care, on-line classes

Appendix B

Focus Group Letter in English

Date: July 2, 2007

Dear Focus Group Participants,

On behalf of KCCD, we would like to invite you to an important study on strengthening families. Through your participation in this focus group, we hope to understand how we and other church, government, and community organizations can better serve the families and marriages in the Korean community. We hope that you will join us and participate extensively in our discussion.

There are no known risks to taking part in this focus group discussion. Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. The focus group participation is voluntary and should take you about one to two hours. Your participation will help us to learn more about the existent needs and concerns in Korean American families and marriages and ways we can help build healthier marriages and families within the community. As an added incentive, we will provide a small gift-card for your participation.

To confirm your attendance or to share any concerns about the focus group, you may contact Young Jin Kum at familykum@kccd3300.org; (213) 985-1500 or (714) 287-2458 or Dr. Rebecca Y. Kim (rebecca.y.kim@pepperdine.edu).

Sincerely,

Hyepin Im

President and C.E.O.

Korean Churches for Community Development
Los Angeles Headquarter Office
3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #922
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(Tel)213-985-1500

Website: www.kccd3300.org

Focus Group Letter in Korean

친애하는 Focus Group 참가자들에게

무엇보다 먼저 귀하께서 KCCD에서 지원하는 FOCUS GROUP에 참가하시기로 결정해 주신데 대해 깊은 감사를 드립니다. 귀하의 참여로 말미암아 우리와 함께 하는 모든 교회들과 정부기관, 그리고 사회 단체들이 한인 사회를 더욱 잘 섬길 수 있게 되기를 바라고 있습니다.

귀하께서 FOCUS GROUP 토의에 참가하시는 데는 어떠한 위험 요소도 없을 것입니다. 이 연구와 관련하여 얻게 되는 어떤 정보나 개인적인 신상에 대해서는 철저히 비밀이 보장됩니다. 설문에는 자발적으로 참여하실 수 있으며 설문에 걸리는 시간은 대략 1-2시간 정도가 소요될 것입니다. 귀하의 참여로 말미암아 저희가 한인 사회의 현실적인 필요와 관심분야를 더욱 잘 이해하고 나아가서 한인 부부 및 가정들이 더욱 건강할 수 있도록 지원하고 돕는 일에 크게 도움이 될 것입니다. 이 설문조사에 참여하신 데 대해 감사의 표시로써 작은 선물용 카드(GIFT CARD)를 보내 드립니다.

Focus Group 에 관하여 혹 질문이나 언급하고 싶은 얘기가 있으시면 KCCD의 Young Jin Kum (familykum@kccd3300.org; 213 985-1500 or 714 287-2458), or Dr. Rebecca Y. Kim (rebecca.y.kim@pepperdine.edu) 씨에게 연락해 주십시오.

임 혜빈 (KCCD 회장/CEO) 올림

President and C.E.O.
Korean Churches for Community Development
3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #922
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Website: www.kccd3300.org

Focus Group Questions in English

1. What is a “healthy” marriage? For Korean immigrants? Second-generations?
2. What percent of Korean immigrants have “healthy marriages”?
3. Korean and other Asians are stereotyped as having good marriages because of their relatively lower divorce rate...but do you think there are problems in Korean marriages that go undetected? If so, what are they--what are some factors that make Korean marriages “unhealthy”?
4. What are your perceptions of marriage education classes? If negative, what can we do to counteract the negative perceptions?
5. What are some marriage education services that are available to Korean Americans?
6. Has anyone here or anyone that you know of used those services? If so, how did you/they find out about the services? Accessible? Helpful?
7. What marriage education programs are needed? What would be useful? (e.g., surviving affairs, addictions, pornography, interracial relationships, singles, divorce care, remarriage)
8. What could we do so that more people would use these programs? (i.e., time, on-line programs, weekends, childcare)
9. What partners should be involved in this effort? (i.e., media, corporations, churches, organizations, etc.)
10. If we were to put together a Public Service Announcement/Advertising campaign, what are some messages that we should deliver? How? Suggestions?
11. Are you aware of any Train the Trainer Sessions for Marriage Education Programs? What kind of Train the Trainer Sessions are needed in the community? How should they be organized?
12. How can KCCD help you to promote healthy marriages in your organization or network?

Any questions/comments? Thank you for your participation

Focus Group Questions in Korean

포커스 그룹 설문지

1. “건강한” 결혼생활이란 어떤 것이라고 생각하십니까? 한인 이민1세에게는?
또 2세에게는?
2. 한인 이민자들은 몇 퍼센트나 “건강한 결혼생활”을 누리고 있다고 당신은 생각하십니까?
3. 한인과 아시아인들은 비교적 낮은 이혼률 때문에 보편적으로 안정된 결혼생활을 한다고 생각하는 경향이 있지만 한인 가정에도 노출되지는 않았지만 문제들이 있다고 생각하십니까? 있다면 어떤 문제들 – 곧 한인 가정들을 건강하지 못하게 하는 요소들은 무엇일까요?
4. 결혼 교육을 위한 프로그램에 대해 어떻게 생각하십니까? 만약 부정적인 생각이라면 그러한 부정적인 생각을 극복하기 위해 우리가 어떻게 해야 할까요?
5. 미국에 사는 한인 가정들이 도움을 받을 수 있는 어떤 결혼 교육 프로그램이 진행되는 곳을 알고 계십니까?
6. 주변에서 위의 프로그램에 참석해본 사람이 있으십니까? 있다면 그러한 프로그램에 대한 그들의 평가는 어떠합니까? (참석이 용이했는지? 혹은 도움이 되었는지?)
7. 한인 가정을 돕기 위한 어떤 프로그램이 필요하다고 생각하십니까? 어떤 프로그램이 실제로 도움이 되겠습니까? (예로, 외도문제, 중독, 포르노 문제, 타인종과의 결혼, 미혼들 문제, 이혼, 재혼)
8. 이 프로그램을 더 많은 사람들이 사용하도록 하려면 어떻게 해야 할까요? (시간관계, 온라인 프로그램, 주말 활용, 아이들 맡기기 등)
9. 이러한 결혼 교육프로그램을 위해 어떤 사람들이 더 참여해야 할까요? (예: 방송국이나 회사들, 교회나 기관 등)
10. 만약 우리가 이런 프로그램을 홍보나 광고를 한다면, 어떠한 내용을 포함시켜야 할까요?
11. 결혼 교육 프로그램의 강사 훈련에 대해 알고 계십니까? 한인사회를 위해 어떤 훈련이 필요하다고 보십니까? 이 일을 위해 어떻게 조직할 수 있을까요?
12. KCCD에서 여러분의 교회나 기관에서 보다 건강한 가정을 만들기 위해 어떻게 도와드리면 좋을까요?

질문이나 조언이 있으십니까? 감사합니다.

Appendix C

Introduction Letter for the General Individual Survey in English

July 5, 2007

Dear Friends,

You are invited to take a survey as part of a research project on marriage and family education that is supported by the *Korean Churches for Community Development*. Through your participation, we hope to understand how we and other church, government, and community organizations can better serve the families and marriages in the Korean community.

There are no known risks to taking part in this survey. Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. The survey is voluntary and should take you about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will help us to provide more funding and support to promote healthy marriages and families within the Korean community. As an added incentive, you will have an opportunity to enter a drawing to win \$50.00 gifts cards at Starbucks or Target. We will pick 5 winners out of approximately 100 survey respondents.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact Reverend Young Jin Kum (familykum@kccd3300.org; 213 985-1500 or 714 287-2458) or Dr. Rebecca Y. Kim (rebecca.y.kim@pepperdine.edu).

The password for the survey is: **marriage**

General Healthy Marriage Survey in English

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=tMce_2beaElufsttWS_2bncjPw_3d_3d

Sincerely,

Hyepin Im

President and C.E.O.
Korean Churches for Community Development
3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #922
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Website: www.kccd3300.org

Introduction Letter for the General Individual Survey in Korean

July 5, 2007

친애하는 응답자님께,

귀하는 KCCD 에서 지원하는 결혼과 가족 교육에 대한 연구의 일부로서 실시되는 설문조사에 초대 되었습니다. 귀하의 참여로 말미암아 우리와 함께 하는 모든 교회들과 지역의 단체들이 한인 사회를 더욱 잘 섬길 수 있기를 바라고 있습니다.

이 설문에 참여하는 데에는 아무런 위험 부담은 없습니다. 이 설문조사와 관련하여 얻게 되는 어떤 정보나 개인적인 신상에 대해서도 안전하게 보관될 것입니다. 설문에 대해서는 자발적으로 참여하실 수 있으며 설문을 끝내는 데는 대략 15-20분 정도의 시간이 소요될 것입니다. 귀하의 참여로 말미암아 저희가 한인 사회의 부부 및 가정들이 더욱 건강하도록 지원하고 돕는 일에 크게 도움이 될 것입니다. 이 설문조사에 참여하신 분에게는 행운의 추첨권에 참여할 수 있는 기회가 주어집니다. 설문조사에 참여하신 100분들 가운데 5 명에게 50\$ 상당의 스타박스나 타겟 선물권을 드립니다.

The password for the survey is: **marriage**

General Healthy Marriage Survey in Korean

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Ucpom02Px1LywDvpaVdZKw_3d_3d

설문에 답하시는 중에 혹 질문이나 언급하고 싶은 얘기가 있으시면 KCCD의 Young Jin Kum (1-213 -985-1500, 1-714-287-2458) 이나 Dr. Rebecca Y. Kim (rebecca.y.kim@pepperdine.edu) 에게 연락 주십시오.

임 혜빈 (KCCD 회장) 올림

President and C.E.O.
Korean Churches for Community Development
3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #922
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Website: www.kccd3300.org

Appendix D

Introduction Letter for the Community Leaders Survey in English

July 9, 2007

Dear Church and Community Leaders,

You are invited to take a survey as part of a research project on marriage and family education that is supported by the *Korean Churches for Community Development*. You have been chosen for this survey because you are a leader of a church or community organization. Through your participation, we hope to understand how we and other church, government, and community organizations can better serve the families and marriages in the Korean community.

The information that you provide will likely be published and used in future publications and presentations by the *Korean Churches for Community Development*. The survey is voluntary and should take you about 30 minutes to complete. Your responses will help us to provide more funding and support to promote healthy marriages and families within the Korean community. As an added incentive, you will have an opportunity to enter a drawing to win \$50.00 gifts cards at Starbucks or Target. We will pick 5 winners out of approximately 100 survey respondents.

The password for the survey is: **marriage**

Leaders' Healthy Marriage Survey in English:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qoQZ8Oq_2fyY_2fOkHB6xUD_2bnw_3d_3d

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire, please contact Reverend Young Jin Kum (familykum@kccd3300.org; (213) 985-1500 or (714) 287-2458) or Dr. Rebecca Y. Kim (rebecca.y.kim@pepperdine.edu).

Sincerely,

Hyepin Im
President and C.E.O.
Korean Churches for Community Development
3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #922
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Website: www.kccd3300.org

Introduction Letter for the Community Leaders Survey in Korean

7월 10일

친애하는 목사님과 지도자님께,

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The password for the survey is: **marriage**

Leaders' Healthy Marriage Survey in Korean:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Y9I2N7bk_2fL_2fw85erb8YtUQ_3d_3d

설문에 답하시는 중에 혹 질문이나 언급하고 싶은 얘기가 있으시면 KCCD의 Young Jin

Kum (1-213 -985-1500, 1-714-287-2458) 이나 Dr. Rebecca Y. Kim

(rebecca.y.kim@pepperdine.edu) 에게 연락 주십시오.

임혜빈 올림

President and C.E.O.

Korean Churches for Community Development

3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #922

Los Angeles, CA 90010

Website: www.kccd3300.org

Appendix E

General Individual Healthy Marriage Survey⁶¹

Healthy Marriage Initiative Survey

Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Network (APAHMN)

Korean Churches for Community Development

The purpose of this survey is to develop a comprehensive strategy for meeting the Korean American community's needs in the area of marriage education. This survey will take about 15-30 minutes to complete. Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential.

Part I. Background Information

1. Sex: Male Female
2. Age: _____
3. Education level:
 - a. College or more
 - b. Some college (did not finish college)
 - c. High school graduate
 - d. Less than high school education
4. Occupation (if applicable): _____
5. Marital status:
 - a. Married
 - b. Separated but not legally divorced
 - c. Legally divorced
 - d. Single and never previously married
 - e. Other _____
6. Do you have any children?
 - a. Yes, # of children _____
 - b. No
7. Religious/spiritual affiliation?
 - a. Christian/Protestant/Catholic
 - b. Buddhist
 - c. No religious/spiritual affiliation
 - d. Other _____
8. Attend a church or temple with other Korean Americans?
 - a. Yes b. No
9. City/State of residence _____
10. Length of residence in the U.S.?
 - a. Less than 5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. More than 10 years
 - d. Born in the U.S.

⁶¹ The visual structure of the on-line versions of the surveys is different, but the questions are all the same.

Part II. Relationship Scale

Please rate your marriage relationship on a scale of 1-5. If you are divorced or separated, please rate your most recent marriage. If you have not yet married, rate your parents' marriage. (1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Don't know)

1. Enjoy each other's company
2. Can trust and be honest with one another
3. Share in decision making
4. Work together to solve problems and manage conflict
5. Are verbally and/or physically affectionate towards one another
6. Can turn to other couples/people for relationship support
7. Resolve conflicts in a positive way
8. Share many values together (agree on what is important in life)
9. Share responsibilities in keeping the household running smoothly
10. Are able to easily talk and communicate with one another
11. Are physically abusive and/or abused
12. Are verbally abusive and/or abused
13. Are happy with the level of emotional/spiritual intimacy in their relationship
14. Are happy with the level of physical intimacy in their relationship
15. Overall, have a "healthy" marriage
16. Are interested in taking marriage enrichment or counseling classes
17. Are likely to take marriage enrichment class if they were offered at church or a nearby community center

Part III. Please Answer True or False

1. Marriage education is for couples with problems.
2. You don't need marriage education until you are engaged.
3. Troubled marriages aren't salvageable.
4. If you love each other, you don't need marriage education.
5. In my immediate family (parent, sibling, children, spouse), there has been divorce.

6. In my immediate family, there is someone who is having serious marriage/family problems.
7. Most Korean families do not think that they need marriage education courses.
8. Most Korean families could use some marriage/family education courses.
9. Overall, Koreans have a positive attitude toward marriage/family education classes.

Open Ended Questions

1. What do you think hinders Koreans from using marriage education services (e.g., lack of time, finding childcare, culturally not favored, don't know of available services, etc).
2. Are you aware of any marriage education classes? If so, please list them.
3. If you have taken marriage education classes, how would you rate your overall experience? Were they helpful?
4. If you have not taken any marriage education classes, what are some reasons for why you did not take the classes?
5. What are the 3 biggest areas of conflict in your marriage or relationship with other family members? (e.g., boredom, lack of affection, lack of time together, financial troubles, infidelity, domestic violence, gambling, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual abuse, health problems, sexism, racism). If you don't have any conflict in your marriage/family, what do you think are the major areas of conflict in other Korean American marriages/families?
6. List at least three topics that you and/or other Koreans that you know may like covered at a marriage and family seminar (e.g., conflict resolution, drug/chemical dependency rehabilitation, domestic violence, parent/children relationships, tips for finding the right mate, tips on how to keep a marriage strong):
7. What skills could improve your relationships with others? (e.g., listening skills, communication skills, anger management skills, finance management skills)
8. What times/days are convenient for you if you were to take marriage education classes? (Saturdays, Sundays after church, weeknights)
9. What else would be helpful for you if you were to take marriage education classes? (e.g., low fees, on-line classes, childcare, etc)
10. What kinds of marriage education formats are attractive to you? (e.g., workshops, on-line programs, lecture style classes, retreats, couple mentoring, personal counseling, etc)
11. If you could ask a therapist anything regarding marital relationships, what would it be?
12. Any other comments?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

Appendix F

Community Leaders' Healthy Marriage Survey
Korean Churches for Community Development
Healthy Marriage Initiative
Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Network (APAHMN)

Survey on Community Needs Assessment and Community Asset Mapping

This questionnaire will take about 30 minutes to complete. The purpose of this survey is to develop a community-wide strategy for meeting Korean American community's needs in the area of marriage education. The information that you provide will be available to the public. Some minor editing may be done by Korean Churches for Community Development.

**If a particular question does not apply to you, simply skip to the next question.*

Part I. Information on your church/organization

1. Your name (last, first): _____
2. Your e-mail address: _____
3. Name of your church/organization:

4. Church/organization's address:

5. Church/organization's annual budget: _____
6. Church/organization's telephone number:

7. If a church, please complete Questions A~H. (If not a church, skip to Part II.)
 - A. Size of Korean Ministry (KM) (# of members) : _____

B. Size of English Ministry (EM) (# of members) : _____

C. Average age of Korean Ministry :

- a. 18-25
- b. 26-35
- c. 36-45
- d. 46-55
- e. 56-65
- f. 66 or over

D. Average age of English Ministry :

- a. 18-25
- b. 26-35
- c. 36-45
- d. 46-55
- e. 56-65
- f. 66 or over

E. Approximate number of married couples in your Korean Ministry : _____

F. Approximate number of singles in your English Ministry : _____

G. Does your organization currently offer any marriage enrichment/relationship skills/family strengthening programs?

Part II. Information about your current marriage/family related programs

1. For each of the marriage/family strengthening programs currently running (or run in the past), please list the names of the program, length of the program, how long it lasts), and how many times the program is offered each year.

2. Available marriage-related program or service (past or present): Circle all that apply
 - a. Pre-marital (marriage preparation)
 - b. Marital enrichment
 - c. Troubled couples (divorce prevention/crisis intervention/domestic violence)
 - d. Dealing with divorce
 - e. Step-family relationships
 - f. Parent-children relationship
 - g. Relationship among youth
 - h. General relationship enrichment
 - i. Surviving extramarital relationship
 - j. Pornography addiction
 - k. Sex addiction

1. Other: (specify) _____
3. Materials (marriage education textbooks, video tapes, biblical materials, etc.) used in your program(s)? If you have a specific curriculum, please list them as well.
4. Who teaches in your program(s)? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Full-time paid staff
 - b. Part-time paid staff
 - c. Volunteer(s)
 - d. Pastor(s)
 - e. Other(s): (specify) _____
5. Who runs and manages your program(s)?
 - a. Full-time paid staff
 - b. Part-time paid staff
 - c. Volunteer(s)
 - d. Pastor(s)
 - e. Other(s): (specify) _____
6. What is the schedule of the program(s)? (i.e., 7- 9 pm every Tuesday for 3 months)
7. How long have you been running the program(s)?
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. 3 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. More than 5 years
 - e. More then 10 years
 - f. Other: (specify) _____
8. If there is a fee, how much is the fee of the program and the fee of the program materials?
9. Which language is used in the program?
 - a. Korean
 - b. English
 - c. Both
 - d. Other: _____

Part III. Outcome of your marriage education programs

1. On average, how many people participate in each of your programs?
2. What percentage of the participants finishes the program? _____%
3. What reasons lead participants to not finish the program?
 - a. Program schedule (time conflict)
 - b. Location
 - c. Spouse Disapproval
 - d. Finding childcare
 - e. Work
 - f. Other: (explain) _____

4. Who participates in your program(s)? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Church/organization members
 - b. People outside of church/organization
5. What is the estimated average age of the participants in each of your program(s)?
6. What kind of marriage/family education programs were the most popular?
7. Why do you think the program(s) were successful/popular?
8. What programs were not very successful?
9. Why do you think the program is/was not successful?
10. What is/was the best time and schedule that increased participation? _____
11. What is/was the format of the class (you suggest or you have had) that increase(d) participation? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Lecture type class
 - b. Interactive, more discussion oriented class
 - c. Group counseling type
 - d. Personal counseling type
 - e. Phone counseling
 - f. As part of your church retreat
 - g. As part of your church revival
 - h. As part of Sunday school class
 - i. As part of Discipleship program
 - j. Other: (explain) _____
12. What type of class format was not successful in increasing participants? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Lecture type class
 - b. Interactive, more discussion oriented class
 - c. Group counseling type
 - d. Personal counseling type
 - e. Phone counseling
 - f. As part of your church retreat
 - g. As part of your church revival
 - h. Other: (explain) _____
13. Where is the best location to hold these programs? _____
14. Where are your programs/services available? (List all, if more than one)
 - a. In the local community: (city/state) _____
 - b. In the entire county : (county/state) _____
 - c. In multiple counties : (counties/state) _____
 - d. In the entire state : (state) _____

- e. In a region (multi-state):(states/region) _____
 - f. Nationwide : _____
 - g. International : (countries) _____
15. What is the annual budget for these programs? _____
16. Do you have marriage education/relationship skills/family strengthening courses listed on your website?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Part IV. Sources of your marriage education curricula

1. Where did you hear about marriage education classes and curricula?
2. How did you find instructors?
3. What qualifications, training or certification do the instructors, service providers, or program facilitators have to conduct the programs?
 - a. Graduate degree in a related field
 - b. Undergraduate degree in a related field
 - c. Specialized religious training
 - d. Specialized clinical training
 - e. Specialized certification (please explain) _____
 - f. Other _____
 - g. No specialized qualification required for my facilitators, instructors, or providers
4. Do you receive any type of funding outside of your church's/organization's internal revenue to run these marriage education programs? (i.e. grants, in-kind donations, etc.)

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, from where, and how much? _____
5. If you do not receive any type of external funding, how do you fund your program?
6. Would you like to receive outside funding from government, private, or other non-profit resources for your program(s)?

Yes _____ No _____
7. Do you (or your program manager/instructor) attend other marriage education training seminars or conferences to stay updated?

Yes _____ No _____

8. What other sources do you have to get information or updates regarding marriage education trainings or meetings?
 - a. Organizations/training center that my church/org. signed up as a member
(Name of the organization: _____)
 - b. Our program instructor(s)
 - c. Website(s):
 - d. Others:(explain)_____

Part V. Evaluation / Suggestions

1. Who is your current marriage education programs/curriculum directed towards? Directed more toward the culture/life style of:
 - a. The first-generation (Korean immigrants)
 - b. 1.5 generation (born in Korea, but raised in U.S.)
 - c. Second-generation (born and raised in the U.S.)
2. What are some difficulties in running the program(s)? Circle all that apply
 - a. Funding
 - b. Recruiting instructors
 - c. Training facilitators or instructors
 - d. Finding information about ME training service providers
 - e. Finding a facility
 - f. Finding a bilingual (Korean/English) instructors
 - g. Providing translation service
 - h. Lack of participants
 - i. Recruiting male participants
 - j. Other
3. If the participation rate was lower than expected, why do you think it was low?
 - a. Accessibility (location)
 - b. Fees for programs or materials
 - c. Church/org. members are too busy
 - d. Church/org. members not aware of need
 - e. Cultural differences in perception of marriage education programs
 - f. Language barrier
 - g. Other
4. If you were to receive additional funding from outside sources, how would you change your program? What would you improve?
5. Would you be interested in joining a coalition of partners running different marriage/family programs to create a more comprehensive marriage/family service?
6. If you answered “No” to the previous question, why?
7. Are your marriage/family programs culturally sensitive to Korean culture? If not, in what ways are they not sensitive?
8. What family/marriage concerns/needs do your church/org. members have?
9. What family/marriage education programs would interest your church/org. members?
10. What marriage education programs, if any, does your church/org. wish to provide in the future?

11. Are you familiar with any healthy marriage/family strengthening education and support services which target Koreans or Korean Americans?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, specify: _____

12. Do you know of any healthy marriage/family strengthening educational materials that are available in Korean?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, specify: _____

13. Would your church/organization members be interested in taking on-line marriage/family education courses? Yes, No, Maybe

14. How can KCCD provide you assistance in providing family and marriage education resources to your congregation?

15. Any other comments?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Your input is valuable.

For more information on marriage education programs, please visit: www.kccd3300.org

Appendix G

Helpful Websites for Korean American Marriages and Families

Marriage Education

Korean Churches for Community Development

www.kccd3300.org

Visit KCCD's website for a comprehensive updated list of agencies who are serving Korean and Asian American communities locally, nationally, and internationally.